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SERMONS



BY

✓
HENRY MELVILL, B. D.

MINISTER OF CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL,

AND

LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF ST. PETER'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

COMPRISING ALL THE DISCOURSES PUBLISHED BY CONSENT OF THE AUTHOR.

EDITED BY

THE RIGHT REV. C. P. M'ILVAINE, D. D.

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TO THE  
CONGREGATION OF CAMDEN CHAPEL,

CAMBERWELL,

In acknowledgment of many kindnesses shown him, through years of health, and months of sickness; and in the hope that what is now published may help to strengthen them for duty, and comfort them in trial, this volume is inscribed with every sentiment of christian affection, by their faithful friend and pastor,

THE AUTHOR.

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P R E F A C E.

The Author has selected the following sermons for publication, from having observed that passages of Scripture which may more easily be overlooked, as presenting nothing very prominent, prove especially interesting to an audience, when shown to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." He has material in hand for another volume of the like kind, and may hereafter commit it to the press, if he should have reason to think that the present has proved acceptable.

CAMBERWELL, January, 1843.



## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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THE author of these discourses is well known in England as an eloquent and earnest preacher of the Gospel. "Envy itself," says the British Critic, "must acknowledge his great abilities and great eloquence." After having occupied the highest standing, while an under-graduate of the University of Cambridge, he was chosen to a Fellowship in St. Peter's College, and, for some time, was a tutor to that Society. Thence he was called to the pastoral charge of Camden Chapel, (a proprietary chapel,) in the overgrown parish of Camberwell, one of the populous suburbs of London. The first twelve discourses in this volume were preached in that pulpit, and the rest, while he was connected therewith. It has not unfrequently been the privilege of the Editor to worship and listen, in company with the highly interesting and intelligent congregation that crowds the pews and aisles, and every corner of a standing-place in that edifice; fully participating in that entire and delightful captivity of mind in which their beloved pastor is wont to lead the whole mass of his numerous auditory.

Melvill is not yet what is usually called a middle-aged man. His constitution and physical powers are feeble. His lungs and chest needing constant care and protection, often seem determined to submit no longer to the efforts they are required to make in keeping pace with his high-wrought and intense animation. The hearer sometimes listens with pain lest an instrument so frail, and struck by a spirit so nerved with the excitement of the most inspiring themes, should suddenly break some silver cord, and put to silence a harper whose notes of thunder, and strains of warning, invitation, and tenderness, the church is not prepared to lose. Generally, however, one thinks but little of the speaker while hearing Melvill. The manifest defects of a very peculiar delivery, both as regards its action and intonation; (if that may be called action which is the mere quivering and jerking of a body too intensely excited to be quiet a moment)—the evident feebleness and exhaustion of a frame charged to the brim with an earnestness which seems laboring to find a tongue in every limb, while it keeps in strain and rapid action every muscle and fibre, are forgotten, after a little progress of the discourse, in the rapid and swelling current of thought in which the hearer is carried along, wholly engrossed with the new aspects, the rich and glowing scenery, the bold prominences and beautiful landscapes of truth, remarkable both for variety and unity, with which every turn of the stream delights him. But then one must make haste, if he would see all. Melvill delivers his discourses as a war-horse rushes to the charge. He literally *runs*, till for want of breath he can do so no longer. His involuntary pauses are as convenient to his audience as essential to himself. Then it is, that an equally breathless audience, betraying the most convincing signs of having forgotten to breathe, commence their preparation for the next outset with a degree of unanimity and of business-like effort of adjustment, which can hardly fail of disturbing, a little, a stranger's gravity.

There is a peculiarity in the composition of Melvill's congregation which contributes much to give peculiarity to his discourses. His chapel is a centre to which hearers flock, drawn by the reputation of the preacher, not only from all the neighborhood, but from divers parts of the great metropolis, bringing under his reach, not only the highest intellectual character, but all varieties of states of mind; from that of the devout believer, to that of the habitual doubter, or confirmed infidel. In this mixed multitude, *young men*, of great importance, occupy a large place. Seed sown in that congregation is seen scattered over all London, and carried into all England. Hence there is an evident effort on the part of the preacher to introduce as much variety of topic and of treatment as is consistent with the great duty of always preaching and teaching Jesus Christ; of always holding up the cross, with all its connected truths surrounding it, as the one great and all-pervading subject of his ministry. To these circumstances he alludes in a passage towards the end of the sermon on *the Difficulties of Scripture*, a sermon we would particularly recommend to the reader—and a passage, introductory to one of the most eloquent and impressive parts of the whole volume. "We feel (he says) that we have a difficult part to perform in ministering to the congregation which assembles within these walls. Gathered as it is from many parts, and without question including, oftentimes, numbers who make no profession, whatsoever, of religion, we think it bound on us to seek out great variety of subjects, so that, if possible, the case of none of the audience may be quite overlooked in a series of

discourses." We know not the preacher who succeeds better in this respect; who causes to pass before his people a richer, or more complete array of doctrinal and practical truth; exhibits it in a greater variety of lights; surrounds it with a scenery of more appropriate and striking illustration; meets more of the influential difficulties of young and active minds; grapples with more of the real enmity of scepticism, and for all classes of his congregation more diligently "seeks out acceptable words," or brings more seasonably, out of his treasures, things new and old, and yet without failing to keep within the circle of always preaching Christ—teaching not only the truth, but "the truth as it is in Jesus," without obscurity, without compromise, and without fear; pointedly, fully, habitually.

It is on account of this eminent union of variety and faithfulness, this wide compass of excursion without ever losing sight of the cross as the central light and power in which every thing in religion lives, and moves, and has its being; it is because that same variety of minds which throng the seats and standing-places of Camden chapel, and hang with delight upon the lips of the preacher, finding in his teaching what rivets their attention, rebukes their worldliness, shames their doubts, annihilates their difficulties, and enlarges their views of the great and precious things of the Gospel, are found every where in this land, especially among our educated young men, that we have supposed the publication of these discourses might receive the Divine blessing, and be productive of very important benefits.

It can hardly be necessary to say, that in causing a volume to issue from the press, as this does, one does not make himself responsible for every jot and tittle of what it contains. It may be calculated powerfully to arrest attention, disarm prejudice, conciliate respect, stimulate inquiry, impress most vital truth; and in many ways effect a great deal of good, though we be not prepared to concur with its author in some minor thoughts or incidental ideas on which none of the great matters in his volume depend.

There are some aspects in which these discourses may be profitably studied by candidates for orders, and indeed by most preachers, exclusive of the substantial instruction of their contents. We do not refer to their *style*. This we cannot recommend for imitation. However we may like it in Melvill, because it is emphatically *his*, the mode of his mind; the gait in which his thoughts most naturally march on their high places; the raiment in which his inner man invests itself, without effort, and almost of necessity, when he takes the place of ambassador of the King of kings, we might not like it any where else. However this peculiar turn and swell of expression may be adapted to that peculiar breadth, and height, and brilliancy of conception for which this author is often distinguished; with all those other attributes which adapt his discourses to opportunities of usefulness not often improved; and a class of readers not often attracted, by the preacher; we should think it a great evil if our candidates for orders should attempt to appear in such flowing robes. For the same reason that they sit well on him, would they sit awkwardly on them. They are his, and not theirs. His mind was measured for such a dress. Nature made it up and adapted it to his style of thought, insensible to himself. The diligent husbandman may be as useful in his way, as the prince in his. But the husbandman in the equipment of the prince would be sadly out of keeping. Not more than if a mind of the usual turn and character of thought should emulate the stride and the swing, the train and the plumage of Melvill.

It is in the *expository* character of this author's discourses, that we would present them for imitation. Of the expositions themselves, we are not speaking; but of the conspicuous fact that whatever Scripture he selects, his sermon is made up of its elements. His text does not merely introduce his subject, but suggests and contains it; and not only contains, but is identical with it. His aim is confined to the single object of setting forth plainly and *instructively* some one or two great features of scriptural truth, of which the chosen passage is a distinct declaration. No matter what the topic, the hearer is sure of an interesting and prominent setting out of the text in its connection, and that it will exercise an important bearing upon every branch of the discourse, constantly receiving new lights and applications, and not finally relinquished till the sermon is ended, and the hearer has obtained an inception of that one passage of the Bible upon his mind, never to be forgotten. In other words, Melvill is strictly a preacher upon *texts*, instead of *subjects*; upon truths, as expressed and connected in the Bible, instead of topics, as insulated or classified, according to the ways of man's wisdom. This is precisely as it should be. The preacher is not called to deliver *dissertations* upon questions of theology, or *orations* upon specific themes of duty and spiritual interest, but expositions of divine truth as that is presented in the infinitely diversified combinations, and incidental allocations of the Scriptures. His work is simply that of making, through the blessing of God, the Holy Scriptures "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness." This he is to seek by endeavoring "rightly to divide the word of truth." Too much, by far, has the preaching of these days departed from this expository character. The praise of *invention* is too much coveted. The simplicity of interpretation and application is too much undervalued. We must be content to take the bread as the Lord has created it, and perform



the humble office of *distribution*, going round amidst the multitude, and giving to all as each may need, believing that he who provided it will see that there be enough and to spare, instead of desiring to stand in the place of the Master, and improve by our wisdom the simple elements, "*the five barley loaves*" which he alone can make sufficient "among so many."

But apart from the *duty* of preaching upon and out of the Scriptures, instead of merely taking a verse as the starting-place of our train of remark; apart from the obligation of so expounding the word of God, that the sermon shall take its shape and character from the text; and the doctrine and the duty shall be taught and urged according to the relative bearings and proportions in which they are presented therein; this *textual* plan of constructing discourses is the only one by which a preacher can secure a due variety in his ministry, except he go outside the limits of always preaching Christ crucified, and deal with other matters than such as bear an important relation to the person, office, and benefits of "the Lord our Righteousness." He who preaches upon *subjects in divinity*, instead of passages of Scripture, fitting a text to his theme, instead of extracting his theme from his text, will soon find that, in the ordinary frequency of parochial ministrations, he has gone the round, and traced all the great highways of his field, and what to do next, without repeating his course, or changing his whole mode of proceeding, he will be at a great loss to discover. Distinct *objects* in the preacher's message, like the letters in his alphabet, are few—few when it is considered that his life is to be occupied in exhibiting them. But their combinations, like those of the letters of the alphabet, are innumerable. Few are the distinct classes of objects which make up the beautiful landscapes under the light and shadows of a summer's day. The naturalist, who describes by *genera* and *species*, may soon enumerate them. But boundless is the variety of aspects in which they appear under all their diversities of shape, color, relation, magnitude, as the observer changes place, and sun and cloud change the light. The painter must paint for ever to exhibit all. So as to the great truths to which the preacher must give himself for life. Their variety of combinations, as exhibited in the Bible, is endless. He who treats them with strict reference to all the diversities of shape, proportion, incident, relation, circumstance, under which the pen of inspiration has left them, changing his point of observation with the changing positions and wants of his hearers, allowing the lights and shadows of Providence to lend their rightful influence in varying the aspect and applications of the truth—such a preacher, if his heart be fully in his work, can never lack variety, so far as it is proper for one who is to "know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and him crucified." He will constantly feel as if he had only begun the work given him to do—furnished only a few specimens out of a rich and inexhaustible cabinet of gems. By strictly adhering to this plan, the author of these discourses attains unusual variety in his ministry, considering that he makes it so prominently his business to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

But here it may be well to say that by *variety*, as desirable to a certain extent, in the preacher's work, we mean nothing like *originality*. Some minds cannot help a certain measure of originality. They may treat of old themes, and with ideas essentially the same as any one else would employ, but with peculiarities of thought which set them far apart from all other minds. But to *seek* originality, while it is very commonly the mistake of young preachers, is a very serious error. There cannot be any thing new in the preacher's message. He that seeks *novelties* will be sure to preach *fancies*. "The real difficulty and the real triumph of preaching is to enforce home upon the mind and conscience, trite, simple, but all-important truths; to urge old topics in common language, and to send the hearer back to his house awakened, humbled, and impressed; not so much astonished by the blaze of oratory, but thinking far more of the argument than of the preacher; sensible of his own sins, and anxious to grasp the proffered means of salvation. To say the same things which the best and most pious ministers of Christ's church have said from the beginning; to tread in their path, to follow their footsteps, and yet not servilely to copy, or verbally to repeat them; to take the same groundwork, and yet add to it an enlarged and diversified range of illustrations, brought up as it were to the age, and adapted to time and circumstance; this is, we think, the true originality of the pulpit. To be on the watch to strike out some novel method of display,—to dash into the fanciful, because it is an arduous task to arrest the same eager notice by the familiar—this is not originality, but mannerism or singularity. And although few can be original, nothing is more easy than to be singular."

The discourses contained in this volume are all that *Melville* has published; unless there be one, or two, in pamphlet form, of which the Editor has not heard. We say all that *Melville* has published. Many others have been published *surreptitiously*, which he never prepared for the press, and which ought not to be read as specimens of his preaching. In the English periodical, called "The Pulpit," there are many such sermons, under the name of *Melville*. In justice to that distinguished preacher, and to all others whose names are similarly used, it should be known that the contents of that work are mere stenographic reports, by hired agents of the press, who go to church that they may get an article for

the next number of *The Pulpit*. While the rest of the congregation are hearing the sermon for spiritual, they are hearing it for pecuniary profit. We see no difference between a week-day press, furnished thus by Sunday writers, and a Sunday-press furnished by week-day writers. "The Pulpit" is in this way as much a desecrator of the Sabbath as the "Sunday Morning Post," or "Herald." But this is not the point at present. We are looking at the exceeding injustice done to the preacher whose sermons are reported. It may be that he is delivering a very familiar, perhaps an unwritten discourse; special circumstances have prevented his devoting the usual time or mind to the preparation; or have interfered with his getting up the usual energy of thought for the work. He does not dream of the public press. The sermon may be useful for his people, but just the one which he would dislike to send out before the world. Nevertheless, the reporter for *The Pulpit* has happened to choose his church, that morning, "for better, for worse," and he cannot lose his time. The tale of bricks must be rendered to the taskmaster. The press waits for its article, and the stenographer wants his wages, and favorable or unfavorable, the report must be printed. Like all such productions, it is of course often careless and inaccurate; sometimes provokingly and very injuriously inaccurate. The attention of the scribe happened to be diverted at a place of main importance; he lost the explanatory remark, the qualifying words, the connecting link—his report is thus untrue: either he leaves the hiatus, occasioned by his negligence, unsupplied, or, what is often the case, daubs it up with his own mortar, puts many sentences into the preacher's mouth of his own taste and divinity—thus is the precious specimen composed, and that week is advertised, to the great mortification of the alleged author, *an original sermon in the last number of the Pulpit, by the Rev. Henry Melvill, &c.* Such is the history of almost every sermon which has as yet been read in this country as belonging to that author; *The Pulpit*, or extracts from it having circulated widely, while the real sermons of Melvill, having been, prior to this, confined to volumes of English edition, are scarcely known among us. No one can help seeing how injurious such surreptitious publications must be to the preacher; what a nuisance to the body whom they profess to represent. So is the magazine of which we have been speaking, regarded in England. Not unfrequently ministers have been obliged to print their discourses for the purpose of correcting the errors of its reporters. More than once its Editor has been prosecuted for the purpose (though in vain) of stopping this exceedingly objectionable mode of sustaining "The Pulpit."

The editor of this volume has thought it expedient to make these remarks by way of explanation of his having excluded all the discourses ascribed to Melvill contained in *The Pulpit*. If there be any discourses under the same name, in the other periodical of the same character, called the *British Preacher*, they are subject to the same condemnation.

It is no little evidence of the value of these sermons, in this volume, which were preached before the University of Cambridge, that their publication was in consequence of a request "from the resident Bachelors and Under-graduates, headed by the most distinguished names, and numerously signed." A strong attestation has also been given not only to the University sermons, but to those preached in the author's Chapel, in Camberwell, in the fact that, flooded as is the market with the immense variety of pulpit composition, which the London press continually pours in, so that a bookseller can scarcely be persuaded to publish a volume of sermons at his own risk, and such a volume seldom reaches beyond a single edition, these of Melvill have, in a short time, attained their *third*, and do not cease to attract much attention. The *British Critic*, though criticising with some justice and more severity some peculiarities of our author, speaks of the Cambridge sermons as possessing many specimens of great power of thought, and extraordinary felicity and brilliancy of diction." "Heartily" does the Reviewer "admire the breathing words, the bold figures, the picturesque images, the forcible reasonings, the rapid, vivid, fervid perorations."

In conclusion of this Preface, the Editor adds the earpest hope that the author of these discourses may receive wages, as well in this country as his own—wages such as best pay the devoted minister of Christ; that he may reap where he did not think of sowing, and gather where he did not expect to strew, to the praise of the glory of our blessed Lord, and only Savior, Jesus Christ.

C. P. M.



# SERMON I.

## THE FIRST PROPHECY.

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”—GENESIS, iii: 15.

Such is the first prophecy which occurs in Scripture. Adam and Eve had transgressed the simple command of their Maker; they had hearkened to the suggestions of the tempter, and eaten of the forbidden fruit. Summoned into the presence of God, each of the three parties is successively addressed; but the serpent, as having originated evil, receives first his sentence.

We have, of course, no power of ascertaining the external change which the curse brought upon the serpent. The terms, however, of the sentence, “upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life,” Gen. 3: 14, seem to imply that the serpent had not been created a reptile, but became classed with creeping things, as a consequence of the curse. It is probable that heretofore the serpent had been remarkable for beauty and splendor, and that on this account the tempter chose it as the vehicle of his approaches. Eve, in all likelihood, was attracted towards the creature by its loveliness: and when she found it endowed, like herself, with the power of speech, she possibly concluded that it had itself eaten of the fruit, and acquired thereby a gift which she thought confined to herself and her husband.

But we may be sure, that, although, to mark his hatred of sin, God pronounced a curse on the serpent, it was against the devil, who had actuated the serpent, that the curse was chiefly directed. It may be said that the serpent itself must have been innocent in the matter, and that the curse should have fallen on none but the tempter. But you are to remember that the serpent

suffered not alone: every living thing had share in the consequences of disobedience. And although the effect of man's apostacy on the serpent may have been more signal and marked than on other creatures, we have no right to conclude that there was entailed so much greater suffering on this reptile as to distinguish it in misery from the rest of the animal creation.

But undoubtedly it was the devil, more emphatically than the serpent, that God cursed for the seduction of man. The words, indeed, of our text have a primary application to the serpent. It is most strictly true, that, ever since the fall, there has been enmity between man and the serpent. Every man will instinctively recoil at the sight of a serpent. We have a natural and unconquerable aversion from this tribe of living things, which we feel not in respect to others, even fiercer and more noxious. Men, if they find a serpent, will always strive to destroy it, bruising the head in which the poison lies; whilst the serpent will often avenge itself, wounding its assailant, if not mortally, yet so as to make it true that it bruises his heel.

But whilst the words have thus, undoubtedly, a fulfilment in respect of the serpent, we cannot question that their reference is chiefly to the devil. It was the devil, and not the serpent, which had beguiled the woman; and it is only in a very limited sense that it could be said to the serpent, “Because thou hast done this.” We are indeed so unacquainted with transactions in the world of spirits, that we cannot pretend to determine what, or whether any, immedi-

ate change passed on the condition of Satan and his associates. If the curse upon the serpent took effect upon the devil, it would seem probable, that, ever since the fall, the power of Satan has been specially limited to this earth and its inhabitants. We may gather from the denunciation, "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life," that, in place of being allowed, as he might before time have been, to range through the universe, machinating against the peace of many orders of intelligence, he was confined to the arena of humanity, and forced to concentrate his energies on the destruction of a solitary race. It would seem altogether possible, that, after his ejection from heaven, Satan had liberty to traverse the vast area of creation; and that far-off stars and planets were accessible to his wanderings. It is to the full as possible, that, as soon as man apostatized, God confirmed in their allegiance other orders of beings, and shielded them from the assaults of the evil one, by chaining him to the earth on which he had just won a victory. And if, as the result of his having seduced our first parents, Satan were thus sentenced to confinement to this globe, we may readily understand how words, addressed to the serpent, dooming it to trail itself along the ground, had distinct reference to the tempter by whom that serpent had been actuated.

But, whatever be our opinion concerning this part of the curse, there can be no doubt that our text must be explained of the devil, though, as we have shown you, it has a partial fulfilment in respect of the serpent. We must here consider God as speaking to the tempter, and announcing war between Satan and man. We have called the words a prophecy; and, when considered as addressed to the devil, such is properly their designation. But when we remember that they were spoken in the hearing of Adam and Eve, we must regard them also in the light of a promise. And it is well worth remark, that, before God told the woman of her sorrow and her trouble, and before he told the man of the thorn, and the thistle, and the dust to which he should return, he caused them to hear words which must have inspired them with hope. Vanquished they were: and they might have

thought that, with an undisputed supremacy, he who had prevailed to their overthrow would ever after hold them in vassalage. Must it not then have been cheering to them, whilst they stood as criminals before their God, expecting the sentence which disobedience had provoked, to hear that their conqueror should not enjoy unassaulted his conquest, but that there were yet undeveloped arrangements which would ensure to humanity final mastery over the oppressor? And though, when God turned and spake to themselves, he gave no word of encouragement, but dwelt only on the toil and the death which they had wrought into their portion, still the prophecy to which they had listened must have sunk into their hearts as a promise; and when, with lingering steps, and the first tears ever wept, they departed from the glorious precincts of Eden, we may believe that one sustained the other by whispering the words, though "thou shalt bruise his heel, it shall bruise thy head."

There can be no doubt that intimations of redemption were given to our guilty parents, and that they were instructed by God to offer sacrifices which should shadow out the method of atonement. And though it does not of course follow that we are in possession of all the notices mercifully afforded, it seems fair to conclude, as well from the time of delivery as from the nature of the announcement, that our text was designed to convey comfort to the desponding; and that it was received as a message breathing deliverance by those who expected an utter condemnation.

We are not, however, much concerned with the degree in which the prophecy was at first understood. It cannot justly be called an obscure prophecy: for it is quite clear on the fact, that, by some means or another, man should gain advantage over Satan. And though, if considered as referring to Christ, there be a mystery about it, which could only be cleared up by after events, yet, as a general prediction of victory, it must have commended itself, we think, to the understanding and the heart of those of our race by whom it was first heard.

But whether or no the prophecy were intelligible to Adam and Eve, unto ourselves it is a wonderful passage, spreading itself over the whole of time, and



giving outlines of the history of this world from the beginning to the final consummation. We caution you at once against an idea which many have entertained, that the prediction before us refers only, or even chiefly, to the Redeemer. We shall indeed find, as we proceed, that Christ, who was specially the seed of the woman, specially bruised the head of the serpent. But the prophecy is to be interpreted in a much larger sense. It is nothing less than a delineation of an unwearied conflict, of which this earth shall be the theatre, and which shall issue, though not without partial disaster to man, in the complete discomfiture of Satan and his associates. And no man who is familiar with other predictions of Scripture, can fail to find, in this brief and solitary verse, the announcement of those very struggles and conquests which occupy the gorgeous poetry of Isaiah, and crowd the mystic canvass of Daniel and St. John.

We wish you, therefore, to dismiss, if you have ever entertained, contracted views of the meaning of our text. It must strike you at the first glance, that though Christ was in a peculiar sense the seed of the woman, the phrase applies to others as well as the Redeemer. We are therefore bound, by all fair laws of interpretation, to consider that the prophecy must be fulfilled in more than one individual; especially as it declares that the woman, as well as her seed, should entertain the enmity, and thus marks out more than a single party as engaging in the conflict.

Now there are one or two preliminary observations which require all your attention, if you hope to enter into the full meaning of the prediction.

We wish you, first of all, to remark particularly the expression, "I will put enmity." The enmity, you observe, had no natural existence: God declares his intention of putting enmity. As soon as man transgressed, his nature became evil, and therefore he was at peace, and not at war with the devil. And thus, had there been no interference on the part of the Almighty, Satan and man would have formed alliance against heaven, and, in place of a contest between themselves, have carried on nothing but battle with God. There is not, and cannot be, a native enmity between fallen angels and fallen men. Both are evil,

and both became evil through apostacy. But evil, wheresoever it exists, will always league against good; so that fallen angels and fallen men were sure to join in a desperate companionship. Hence the declaration, that enmity should be put, must have been to Satan the first notice of redemption. This lofty spirit must have calculated, that, if he could induce men, as he had induced angels, to join in rebellion, he should have them for allies in his every enterprise against heaven. There was nothing of enmity between himself and the spirits who had joined in the effort to dethrone the Omnipotent. At least whatever the feuds and jarrings which might disturb the rebels, they were linked, as with an iron band, in the one great object of opposing good. So that when he heard that there should be enmity between himself and the woman, he must have felt that some apparatus would be brought to bear upon man; and that, though he had succeeded in depraving human nature, and thus assimilating it to his own, it should be renewed by some mysterious process, and wrought up to the lost power of resisting its conqueror.

And accordingly it has come to pass, that there is enmity on the earth between man and Satan; but an enmity supernaturally put, and not naturally entertained. Unless God pour his converting grace into the soul, there will be no attempt to oppose Satan, but we shall continue to the end of our days his willing captives and servants. And therefore it is God who puts the enmity. Introducing a new principle into the heart, he causes conflict where there had heretofore been peace, inclining and enabling man to rise against his tyrant. So that, in these first words of the prophecy, you have the clearest intimation that God designed to visit the depraved nature with a renovating energy. And now, whensoever you see an individual delivered from the love, and endowed with a hatred of sin, resisting those passions which held naturally sway within his breast, and thus grappling with the fallen spirit which claims dominion upon earth, you are surveying the workings of a principle which is wholly from above; and you are to consider that you have before you the fulfilment of the declaration, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman."

We go on to observe that the enmity, being thus a superhuman thing, implanted by God and not generated by man, will not subsist universally, but only in particular cases. You will have seen, from our foregoing showings, that a man must be renewed in order to his fighting with Satan; so that God's putting the enmity is God's giving saving grace. The prophecy cannot be interpreted as declaring that the whole human race should be at war with the devil: the undoubted matter-of-fact being that only a portion of the race resumes its loyalty to Jehovah. And we are bound, therefore, before proceeding further with our interpretation, to examine whether this limitation is marked out by the prediction—whether, that is, we might infer, from the terms of the prophecy, that the placed enmity would be partial, not universal.

Now we think that the expression, "Thy seed and her seed," shows at once that the enmity would be felt by only a part of mankind. The enmity is to subsist, not merely between Satan and the woman, but between his seed and her seed. But the seed of Satan can only be interpreted of wicked men. Thus Christ said to the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father ye will do." John, 8: 44. Thus also, in expounding the parable of the tares and the wheat, he said, "The tares are the children of the wicked one." Matt. 13: 38. There is, probably, the same reference in the expression, "O generation of vipers." And, in like manner, you find St. John declaring, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." 1 John, 3: 8. Thus, then, by the seed of Satan we understand wicked men, those who resist God's Spirit, and obstinately adhere to the service of the devil. And if we must interpret the seed of Satan of a portion of mankind, it is evident that the prophecy marks not out the enmity as general, but indicates just that limitation which has been supposed in our preceding remarks.

But then the question occurs, how are we to interpret the woman and her seed? Such expression seems to denote the whole human race. What right have we to limit it to a part of that race? We reply, that it certainly does not denote the whole human race: for if you interpret it literally of Eve and her descend-

ants, Adam, at least, is left out, who was neither the woman nor her seed. But without insisting on the objection under this form, fatal as it is to the proposed interpretation, we should not be warranted, though we have no distinct account of the faith and repentance of Adam, in so explaining a passage as to exclude our common forefather from final salvation. You must see, that, if we take literally the woman and her seed, no enmity was put between Adam and Satan; for Adam was neither the woman nor the seed of the woman. And if Adam continued in friendship with Satan, it must be certain that he perished in his sins: a conclusion to which we dare not advance without scriptural testimony the most clear and explicit.

We cannot, then, understand the woman and her seed, as Eve and her natural descendants. We must rather believe, that as the seed of the serpent is to be interpreted spiritually and symbolically, so also is the seed of the woman. And when you remember that Eve was a signal type of the church, there is an end of the difficulties by which we seem met. You know, from the statement of St. Paul to the Romans, that Adam was the figure of Christ. Rom. 5: 14. Now it was his standing to Eve in the very same relationship in which Christ stands to the church, which specially made Adam the figure of Christ. The side of Adam had been opened, when a deep sleep fell on him, in order that Eve might be formed, an extract from himself. And thus, as Hooker saith, "God frameth the church out of the very flesh, the very wounded and bleeding side of the Son of Man. His body crucified, and his blood shed for the life of the world, are the true elements of that heavenly being which maketh us such as himself is, of whom we come. For which cause the words of Adam may be fitly the words of Christ concerning his church, 'Flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bones.'" We cannot go at length into the particulars of the typical resemblance between Eve and the church. It is sufficient to observe, that since Adam, the husband of Eve, was the figure of Christ, and since Christ is the husband of the church, it seems naturally to follow that Eve was the figure or type of the church. And when we have estab-



lished this typical character of Eve, it is easy to understand who are meant by the woman and her seed. The true church of God in every age—whether you consider it as represented by its head, which is Christ; whether you survey it collectively as a body, or resolve it into its separate members—this true church of God must be regarded as denoted by the woman and her seed. And though you may think—for we wish, as we proceed, to anticipate objections—that, if Eve be the church, it is strange that her seed should be also the church, yet it is the common usage of Scripture to represent the church as the mother, and every new convert as a child. Thus, in addressing the Jewish church, and describing her glory and her greatness in the latter days, Isaiah saith, “Thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.” And again—contrasting the Jewish and Gentile churches—“More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.” So that although the church can be nothing more than the aggregate of individual believers, the inspired writers commonly describe the church as a parent, and believers as the offspring; and in understanding, therefore, the church and its members by the woman and her seed, we cannot be advocating a forced interpretation.

And now we have made a long advance towards the thorough elucidation of the prophecy. We have shown you, that, inasmuch as the enmity is supernaturally put, it can only exist in a portion of mankind. We then endeavored to ascertain this portion: and we found that the true church of God, in every age, comprehends all those who war with Satan and his seed. So that the representation of the prediction—a representation whose justice we have yet to examine—is simply that of a perpetual conflict, on this earth, between wicked angels and wicked men on the one side, and the church of God, or the company of true believers on the other; such conflict, though occasioning partial injury to the church, always issuing in the discomfiture of the wicked.

We now set ourselves to demonstrate the accuracy of this representation. We have already said that there are three points of view in which the church may be regarded. We may consider it, as

represented by its head, which is Christ; secondly, collectively as a body; thirdly, as resolved into its separate members. We shall endeavor to show you briefly, in each of these cases, the fidelity of the description, “It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Now the enmity was never put in such overpowering measure, as when the man Christ Jesus was its residence. It was in Christ Jesus in one sense naturally, and in another supernaturally. He was born pure, and with a native hatred of sin; but then he had been miraculously generated, in order that his nature might be thus hostile to evil. And never did there move the being on this earth who hated sin with as perfect a hatred, or who was as odious in return to all the emissaries of darkness. It was just the holiness of the Mediator which stirred up against him all the passions of a profligate world, and provoked that fury of assault which rushed in from the hosts of reprobate spirits. There was thrown a perpetual reproach on a proud and sensual generation, by the spotlessness of that righteous individual, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” 1 Pet. 2: 22. And if he had not been so far separated, by the purities of life and conversation, from all others of his nature; or if vice had received a somewhat less tremendous rebuke from the blamelessness of his every action; we may be sure that his might and benevolence would have gathered the nation to his discipleship, and that the multitude would never have been worked up to demand his crucifixion.

The great secret of the opposition to Christ lay in the fact, that he was not such an one as ourselves. We are accustomed to think that the lowliness of his condition, and the want of external majesty and pomp, moved the Jews to reject their Messiah: yet it is by no means clear that these were, in the main, the producing causes of rejection. If Christ came not with the purple and circumstance of human sovereignty, he displayed the possession of a supernatural power, which, even on the most carnal calculation, was more valuable, because more effective, than the stanchest apparatus of earthly supremacy. The peasant, who could work the miracles which Christ worked, would be admitted, on all hands, to have mightier engines at his

disposal than the prince who is clothed with the ermine and followed by the warriors. And if the Jews looked for a Messiah who would lead them to mastery over enemies, then, we contend, there was every thing in Christ to induce them to give him their allegiance. The power which could vanquish death by a word might cause hosts to fall, as fell the hosts of Sennacherib; and where then was the foe who could have resisted the leader?

We cannot, therefore, think that it was merely the absence of human pagantry which moved the great ones of Judea to throw scorn upon Jesus. It is true, they were expecting an earthly deliverer. But Christ displayed precisely those powers, which wielded by Moses, had prevailed to deliver their nation from Egypt; and assuredly then, if that strength dwelt in Jesus which had discomfited Pharaoh, and broken the thralldom of centuries, it could not have been the proved incapacity of effecting temporal deliverance which induced pharisees and scribes to reject their Messiah. They could have tolerated the meanness of his parentage; for that was more than compensated by the majesty of his power. They could have endured the lowliness of his appearance; for they could set against it his evident communion with divinity.

But the righteous fervor with which Christ denounced every abomination in the land; the untainted purity by which he shamed the "whited sepulchres" who deceived the people by the appearance of sanctity; the rich loveliness of a character in which zeal for God's glory was unceasingly uppermost; the beautiful lustre which encompassed a being who could hate only one thing, but that one thing sin; these were the producing causes of bitter hostility; and they who would have hailed the wonder-worker with the shout and the plaudit, had he allowed some license to the evil passions of our nature, gave him nothing but the sneer and the execration, when he waged open war with lust and hypocrisy.

And thus it was that enmity, the fiercest and most inveterate, was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The serpent himself came to the assistance of his seed; evil angels conspired with evil men; and the whole energies of apostacy gathered themselves to the effort of destroying the champion of God and of truth. Yea, and for a

while success seemed to attend the endeavor. There was a bruising of the heel of the seed of the woman. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." John, 1: 11. Charged only with an embassy of mercy; sent by the Father—not to condemn the world, though rebellion had overspread its provinces, and there was done the foulest despite to God, in its every section, and by its every tenant—but that the world through him might have life; he was, nevertheless, scorned as a deceiver, and hunted down as a malefactor. And if it were a bruising of the heel, that he should be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," Isaiah, 53: 3; that a nation should despise him, and friends deny and forsake and betray him; that he should be buffeted with temptation, convulsed by agony, lacerated by stripes, pierced by nails, crowned with thorns; then was the heel of the Redeemer bruised by Satan, for to all this injury the fallen angel instigated and nerved his seed. But though the heel was bruised, this was the whole extent of effected damage. There was no real advantage gained over the Mediator: on the contrary, whilst Satan was in the act of bruising Christ's heel, Christ was in the act of bruising Satan's head. The Savior, indeed, exposed himself to every kind of insult and wrong. Whilst enduring "the contradiction of sinners against himself," Heb. 12: 3, it is not to be denied that a strange result was brought round by the machinations of the evil ones; for suffering, which is the attendant on sinfulness, was made to empty all its pangs into the bosom of innocence. And seeing that his holiness should have exempted his humanity from all kinsmanship with sorrow and anguish, we are free to allow that the heel was bruised, when pain found entrance into this humanity, and grief, heavier than had oppressed any being of our race, weighed down his over-wrought spirit.

But, then, there was not an iota of his sufferings which went not towards liquidating the vast debt which man owed to God, and which, therefore, contributed not to our redemption from bondage. There was not a pang by which the Mediator was torn, and not a grief by which his soul was disquieted, which helped not on the achievement of human deliverance, and which, therefore, dealt not out a blow to the despotism of Satan.



So that, from the beginning, the bruising of Christ's heel was the bruising of Satan's head. In prevailing, so far as he did prevail, against Christ, Satan was only effecting his own discomfiture and downfall. He touched the heel, he could not touch the head of the Mediator. If he could have seduced him into the commission of evil; if he could have profaned, by a solitary thought, the sanctuary of his soul; then it would have been the head which he had bruised; and rising triumphant over man's surety, he would have shouted, "Victory!" and this creation have become for ever his own. But whilst he could only cause pain, and not pollution; whilst he could dislocate by agony, but not defile by impurity; he reached indeed the heel, but came not near the head; and, making the Savior's life-time one dark series of afflictions, weakened, at every step, his own hold upon humanity.

And when, at last, he so bruised the heel as to nail Christ to the cross, amid the loathings and revilings of the multitude, then it was that his own head was bruised, even to the being crushed. "Through death," we are told, "Christ Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb. 2: 14. He fell indeed; and evil angels, and evil men, might have thought him for ever defeated. But in grasping this mighty prey, death paralyzed itself; in breaking down the temple, Satan demolished his own throne. It was, as ye all know, by dying, that Christ finished the achievement which, from all eternity, he had covenanted to undertake. By dying, he reinstated fallen man in the position from which he had been hurled. Death came against the Mediator; but, in submitting to it, Christ, if we may use such image, seized on the destroyer, and, waving the skeleton-form as a sceptre over this creation, broke the spell of a thousand generations, dashing away the chains, and opening the graves, of an oppressed and rifled population. And when he had died, and descended into the grave, and returned without seeing corruption, then was it made possible that every child of Adam might be emancipated from the dominion of evil; and, in place of the wo and the shame which transgression had won as the heritage of man, there was the beautiful brightness of a purchased immortality wooing the

acceptance of the sons and daughters of our race. The strong man armed had kept his goods in peace; and Satan, having seduced men to be his companions in rebellion, might have felt secure of having them as his companions in torment. But the stronger than he drew nigh, and, measuring weapons with him in the garden and on the cross, received wounds which were but trophies of victory, and dealt wounds which annihilated power. And when, bruised indeed, yet only marked with honorable scars which told out his triumph to the loftiest orders of intelligent being, the Redeemer of mankind soared on high, and sent proclamation through the universe, that death was abolished, and the ruined redeemed, and the gates of heaven thrown open to the rebel and the outcast, was there not an accomplishment, the most literal and the most energetic, of that prediction which declared to Satan concerning the seed of the woman, "it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel?"

Such is the first and great fulfilment of the prophecy. The church, represented by its head who was specially the seed of the woman, overthrew the devil in one decisive and desperate struggle, and, though not itself unwounded, received no blow which rebounded not to the crushing its opponent.

We proceed, secondly, to consider the church collectively as a body. We need scarcely observe that, from the first, the righteous amongst men have been objects of the combined assault of their evil fellows and evil angels. The enmity has been put, and strikingly developed. On the one hand, it has been the endeavor of the church to vindicate God's honor, and arrest the workings of wickedness: on the other, it has been the effort of the serpent and his seed to sweep from the earth these upholders of piety. And though the promise has all along been verified, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, it cannot be denied that a great measure of success has attended the strivings of the adversary. If you only call to mind what fierce persecution has rushed against the righteous; how by one engine or another there has been, oftentimes, almost a thorough extinction of the very name of christianity; and how, when outwardly there has been peace, tares, sown by

the enemy, have sent up a harvest of perilous heresies; you cannot withhold your acknowledgment that Satan has bruised the heel of the church. But he has done nothing more. If he have hewn down thousands by the sword, and consumed thousands at the stake, thousands have sprung forward to fill up the breach; and if he have succeeded in pouring forth a flood of pestilential doctrine, there have arisen staunch advocates of truth who have stemmed the torrent, and snatched the articles of faith, uninjured, from the deluge. There has never been the time when God has been left without a witness upon earth. And though the church has often been sickly and weak; though the best blood has been drained from her veins, and a languor, like that of moral palsy, has settled on her limbs; still life hath never been wholly extinguished; but, after a while, the sinking energies have been marvelously recruited, and the worn and wasted body has risen up more athletic than before, and displayed to the nations all the vigor of renovated youth.

So that only the heel has been bruised. And since, up to the second advent of the Lord, the church shall be battered with heresy, and persecution, and infidelity, we look not, under the present dispensation, for discontinuance of this bruising of the heel. Yet, while Satan is bruising the church's heel, the church, by God's help, is bruising Satan's head. The church may be compelled to prophesy in sackcloth. Affliction may be her portion, as it was that of her glorified head. But the church is, throughout, God's witness upon earth. The church is God's instrument for carrying on those purposes which shall terminate in the final setting up of the Mediator's kingdom. And, oh, there is not won over a single soul to Christ, and the Gospel message makes not its way to a single heart, without an attendant effect as of a stamping on the head of the tempter: for a captive is delivered from the oppressor, and to deliver the slave is to defeat the tyrant. Thus the seed of the woman is continually bruising the head of the serpent. And whensoever the church, as an engine in God's hands, makes a successful stand for piety and truth; whensoever, sending out her missionaries to the broad waste of heathenism, she demolishes an altar of supersti-

tion, and teaches the pagan to cast his idols to the mole and the bat; or whensoever, assaulting mere nominal christianity, she fastens men to practice as the alone test of profession; then does she strike a blow which is felt at the very centre of the kingdom of darkness, and then is she experiencing a partial fulfilment of the promise, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Rom. 16: 20.

And when the fierce and on-going conflict shall be brought to a close; when this burdened creation shall have shaken off the slaves and the objects of concupiscence, and the church of the living God shall reign, with its head, over the tribes and provinces of an evangelized earth; then in the completeness of the triumph of righteousness shall be the completeness of the serpent's discomfiture. And as the angel and the archangel contrast the slight injury which Satan could ever cause to the church, with that overwhelming ruin which the church has, at last, hurled down upon Satan; as they compare the brief struggle and the everlasting glory of the one, with the shadowy success and the never-ending torments of the other; will they not decide, and tell out their decision in language of rapture and admiration, that, if ever prediction were fulfilled to the very letter, it is that which, addressed to the serpent, and describing the church as the seed of the woman, declared, "it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel?"

Such is the second fulfilment of the prophecy of our text. The church, considered collectively as a body, is so assaulted by the serpent and his seed that its heel is bruised: but even now it offers such resistance to evil, and hereafter it shall triumph so signally over every opponent, that the prediction, "it shall bruise thy head," must be received as destined to a literal accomplishment.

We have yet to notice the third fulfilment. We may resolve the church into its separate members, and, taking each individual believer as the seed of the woman, show you how our text is realized in his experience.

Now if there be enmity between the serpent and the church generally, of course there is also between the serpent and each member of that church. We have already given it as the description



of a converted man, that he has been supernaturally excited to a war with the devil. Whilst left in the darkness and alienation of nature, he submits willingly to the dominion of evil: evil is his element, and he neither strives nor wishes for emancipation. But when the grace of God is introduced into his heart, he will discern quickly the danger and hatefulness of sin, and will yield himself, in a higher strength than his own, to the work of resisting the serpent. Thus enmity is put between the believer and the serpent and his seed. Let a man give himself to the concerns of eternity; let him, in good earnest, set about the business of the soul's salvation; and he will, assuredly, draw upon himself the dislike and opposition of a whole circle of worldly acquaintance, so that his over-preciseness and austerity will become subject of ridicule in his village or neighborhood. We quite mistake the nature both of christianity and of man, if we suppose that opposition to religion can be limited to an age or a country. Persecution, in its most terrible forms, is only the development of a principle which must unavoidably exist until either christianity or human nature be altered. There is a necessary repugnance between christianity and human nature. The two cannot be amalgamated: one must be changed before it will combine with the other. And we fear that this is, in a degree, an overlooked truth, and that men are disposed to assign persecution to local or temporary causes. But we wish you to be clear on the fact, that "the offence of the cross," Gal. 5: 11, has not ceased, and cannot cease. We readily allow that the form, under which the hatred manifests itself, will be sensibly affected by the civilization and intelligence of the age. In days of an imperfect refinement and a scanty literature, you will find this hatred unsheathing the sword, and lighting the pile: but when human society is at a high point of polish and knowledge, and the principles of religious toleration are well understood, there is, perhaps, comparatively, small likelihood that savage violence will be the engine employed against godliness. Yet there are a hundred batteries which may and will be opened upon the righteous. The follower of Christ must calculate on many sneers, and much reviling. He must look to meet often with

coldness and contempt, harder of endurance than many forms of martyrdom; for the courage which could march to the stake may be daunted by a laugh. And, frequently, the opposition assumes a more decided shape. The parent will act harshly towards the child; the superior withdraw his countenance from the dependent; and all because of a giving heed to the directions of Scripture. Religion, as though it were rebellion, alienates the affections, and alters the wills, of fathers and guardians. So that we tell an individual that he blinds himself to plain matters of fact, if he espouse the opinion that the apostle's words applied only to the first ages of christianity, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3: 12. To "live godly in Christ Jesus" is to have enmity put between yourselves and the seed of the serpent; and you may be assured, that, unless this enmity be merely nominal on your side, it will manifest itself by acts on the other.

Thus the prophecy of our text announces, what has been verified by the history of all ages, that no man can serve God without uniting against himself evil men and evil angels. Evil angels will assault him, alarmed that their prey is escaping from their grasp. Evil men, rebuked by his example, will become agents of the serpent, and strive to wrench him from his righteousness.

But what, after all, is the amount of injury which the serpent and his seed can cause to God's children? Is it not a truth, which can only then be denied when you have cashiered the authority of every page of the Bible, that he who believes upon Christ, and who, therefore, has been adopted through faith into God's family, is certain to be made more than conqueror, and to trample under foot every enemy of salvation? The conflict between a believer and his foes may be long and painful. The Christian may be often forced to exclaim with St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. 7: 24. Engaged with the triple band of the world, the flesh, and the devil, he will experience many partial defeats, and surprised off his guard, or wearied out with watchings, will yield to temptation, and so fall into sin. But it is certain, certain as that God is omnipotent and faithful, that the once justifi-

fied man shall be enabled to persevere to the end; to persevere, not in an idle dependence on privileges, but in a struggle which, if for an instant interrupted, is sure to be vehemently renewed. And, therefore, the bruising of the heel is the sum total of the mischief. Thus much, undoubtedly, the serpent can effect. He can harass with temptation, and occasionally prevail. But he cannot undo the radical work of conversion. He cannot eject the principle of grace; and he cannot, therefore, bring back the man into the condition of his slave or his subject. Thus he cannot wound the head of the new man. He may diminish his comforts. He may impede his growth in holiness. He may inject doubts and suspicions, and thus keep him disquieted, when, if he would live up to his privileges, he might rejoice and be peaceful. But all this—and we show you here the full sweep of the serpent's power—still leaves the man a believer; and, therefore, all this, though it bruise the heel, touches not the head.

And though the believer, like the unbeliever, must submit to the power of death, and tread the dark valley of that curse which still rests on our nature, is there experienced more than a bruising of the heel in the undergoing this dissolution of humanity? It is an injury—for we go not with those who would idolize, or soften down, death—that the soul must be detached from the body, and sent out, a widowed thing, on the broad journeyings of eternity. It is an injury, that this curious framework of matter, as much redeemed by Christ as the giant-guest which it encases, must be taken down, joint by joint, and rafter by rafter, and, resolved into its original elements, lose every trace of having been human. But what, we again say, is the extent of this injury? The foot of the destroyer shall be set upon the body; and he shall stamp till he have ground it into powder, and dispersed it to the winds. But he cannot annihilate a lonely particle. He can put no arrest on that germinating process which shall yet cause the valleys and mountains of this globe to stand thick with a harvest of flesh. He cannot hinder my resurrection. And when the soul, over which he hath had no power, rushes into the body which he shall be forced to resign, and the child of God stands forth a man, yet immortal, com-

pound of flesh and spirit, but each pure, each indestructible;—oh, though Satan may have battered at his peace during a long earthly pilgrimage; though he may have marred his happiness by successful temptation; though he may have detained for centuries his body in corruption; will not the inflicted injury appear to have been so trivial and insignificant, that a bruising of the heel, in place of falling short of the matter-of-fact, shall itself seem almost an overwrought description?

And, all the while, though Satan can only bruise the believer's heel, the believer is bruising Satan's head. If the believer be one who fights the serpent, and finally conquers, by that final conquest the serpent's head is bruised. If he be naturally the slave of the serpent; if he rebel against the tyrant, throw off his chains, and vanquish him, fighting inch by inch the ground to freedom and glory; then he bruises the serpent's head. If two beings are antagonists, he who decisively overcomes bruises the head of his opponent. But the believer and the serpent are antagonists. The believer gains completely the mastery over the serpent. And, therefore, the result of the contest is the fulfilment of the prediction that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. Oh, if, as we well know, the repentance of a single sinner send a new and exquisite delight down the ranks of the hosts of heaven, and cause the sweeping of a rich and glorious anthem from the countless harps of the sky, can we doubt that the same event spreads consternation through the legions of fallen spirits, and strikes, like a death-blow, on their haughty and malignant leader? Ay, and we believe that never is Satan so taught his subjugated estate, as when a soul, which he had counted as his own, escapes "as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers," Psalm 124: 7, and seeks and finds protection in Jesus. If it be then that Christ sees "of the travail of his soul," Isaiah, 53: 11, it must be then that the serpent tastes all the bitterness of defeat. And when the warfare is over, and the spirit, which he hath longed to destroy, soars away, convoyed by the angels which wait on the heirs of salvation, must it not be then that the consciousness of lost mastery seizes, with crushing force, on the proud foe of our race; and does not that fierce cry of



disappointment which seems to follow the ascending soul, causing her to feel herself only "scarcely saved," 1 Pet. 4: 18, testify that, in thus winning a heritage of glory, the believer hath bruised the head of the serpent?

We shall not examine further this third fulfilment of the prophecy of our text. But we think that when you contrast the slight injury which Satan, at the worst, can cause to a believer, with the mighty blow which the deliverance of a believer deals out to Satan; the nothingness, at last, of the harm done to God's people, with that fearful discomfiture which their individual rescue fastens on the devil; you will confess, that, considering the church as resolved into its separate members, just as when you survey it collectively as a body, or as represented by its head, there is a literal accomplishment of this prediction to the serpent concerning the seed of the woman, "it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

We have thus, as we trust, shown you that the prophecy of our text extends itself over the whole surface of time, so that, from the fall of Adam, it has been receiving accomplishment, and will continue being fulfilled until "death and hell are cast into the lake of fire." Rev. 20: 14. It was a wonderful announcement, and, if even but imperfectly understood, must have confounded the serpent, and cheered Adam and Eve. Dust shalt thou eat, foe of humankind, when this long oppressed creation is delivered from thy despotism. As though to mark to us that there shall be no suspension of the doom of our destroyer, whilst this earth rejoices in the restitution of all things, Isaiah, in describing millennial harmony, still leaves the serpent under the sentence of our text. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and *dust shall*

*be the serpent's meat.*" Isaiah, 65: 25. There comes a day of deliverance to every other creature, but none to the serpent. Oh, mysterious dealing of our God! that for fallen angels there hath been no atonement, for fallen men a full, perfect, and sufficient. They were far nobler than we, of a loftier intelligence and more splendid endowment; yet ("how unsearchable are his judgments") we are taken and they are left. "For verily he taketh not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold." Hebrews, 2: 16, marginal reading.

And shall we, thus singled out and made objects of marvellous mercy, refuse to be delivered, and take our portion with those who are both fallen and unredeemed? Shall we eat the dust, when we may eat of "the bread which cometh down from heaven?" John, 6: 50. Covetous man! thy money is the dust; thou art eating the serpent's meat. Sensual man! thy gratifications are of the dust; thou art eating the serpent's meat. Ambitious man! thine honors are of the dust; thou art eating the serpent's meat. O God, put enmity between us and the serpent. Will ye, every one of you, use that short prayer ere ye lie down to rest this night, O God, put enmity between us and the serpent? If ye are not at enmity, his folds are round your limbs. If ye are not at enmity, his sting is at your heart. But if ye will, henceforward, count him a foe, oppose him in God's strength, and attack him with the "sword of the Spirit;" Eph. 6: 17; then, though ye may have your seasons of disaster and depression, the promise stands sure that ye shall finally overcome; and it shall be proved by each one in this assembly, that, though the serpent may bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, yet, at last, the seed of the woman always bruises the head of the serpent.

## SERMON II.

### CHRIST THE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH.

“A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.—HEBREWS vii: 15.

The discourse of the Apostle here turns on Jesus, the high priest of our profession, whose superiority to Aaron and his descendants he had established by most powerful reasoning. In the verse preceding our text he takes a summary of the results of his argument, deciding that we have such an high priest as became us, and who had passed from the scene of earthly ministrations to “the throne of the majesty in the heavens.” He then, in the words upon which we are to meditate, gives a description of this high priest as at present discharging sacerdotal functions. He calls him “a minister of the sanctuary, or (according to the marginal reading) of holy things, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.” We think it needful, if we would enter into the meaning of this passage, that we confine it to what Christ is, and attempt not to extend it to what Christ was. If you examine the verses which follow, you will be quite satisfied that St. Paul had in view those portions of the mediatorial work which are yet being executed, and not those which were completed upon earth. He expressly declares that if the Redeemer were yet resident amongst men, he would not be invested with the priestly office—thus intimating, and that not obscurely, that the priesthood now enacted in heaven was that on which he wished to centre attention.

We know indeed that parts of the priestly office, most stupendous and most important, were discharged by Jesus whilst sojourning on earth. Then it was that, uniting mysteriously in his

person the offerer and the victim, he presented himself, a whole burnt sacrifice, to God, and took away, by his one oblation, the sin of an overburdened world. But if you attend closely to the reasoning of St. Paul, you will observe that he considers Christ’s oblation of himself as a preparation for the priestly office, rather than as an act of that office. He argues, in the third verse, that since “every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices,” there was a “necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.” And by then speaking of Christ’s having obtained “a more excellent ministry,” he plainly implies that what he offers as high priest is offered in heaven, and must, therefore, have been rather procured, than presented, by the sacrifice of himself.

We are anxious that you should clearly perceive—as we are sure you must from the study of the context—that Christ in heaven, and not Christ on earth, is sketched out by the words which we are now to examine. The right interpretation of the description will depend greatly on our ascertaining the scene of ministrations. And we shall not hesitate, throughout the whole of our discourse, to consider the apostle as referring to what Christ now performs on our behalf; taking no other account of what he did in his humiliation than as it stands associated with what he does in his exaltation.

You will observe, at once, that the difficulty of our text lies in the assertion, that Christ is “a minister of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Our main business, as



expounders of Scripture, is with the determining what this "true tabernacle" is. For, though we think it ascertained that heaven is the scene of Christ's priestly ministrations, this does not define what the tabernacle is wherein he ministers.

Now there can be but little question, that, in another passage of this Epistle to the Hebrews, the humanity of the Son of God is described as "a tabernacle, not made with hands." The verse occurs in the ninth chapter, in which St. Paul shows the temporary character of the Jewish tabernacle, every thing about it having been simply "a figure for the time then present." Advancing to the contrast of what was enduring with what was transient, he declares that Christ had come, "an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building." Heb. 9: 11. It scarcely admits of debate that the body of the Redeemer, produced as it was by a supernatural operation, constituted this tabernacle in which he came down to earth. And we are rightly anxious to uphold this, which seems the legitimate interpretation, because heretics, who would bring down the Savior to a level with ourselves, find the greatest difficulty in getting rid of this miraculous conception, and are most perplexed by any passage which speaks of Christ as superhumanly generated. It is a common taunt with the Socinian, that the apostles seem to have known nothing of this miraculous conception, and that a truth of such importance, if well ascertained, would not have been omitted in their discussions with unbelievers. We might, if it consisted with our subject, advance many reasons to prove it most improbable, that, either in arguing with gainsayers, or in building up believers, the first preachers of christianity would make frequent use of the mystery of Christ's generation. But, at all events, we contend that one decisive mention is of the same worth as many, and that a single instance of apostolic recognition of the fact, suffices for the overthrow of the heretical objection. And, therefore, we would battle strenuously for the interpretation of the passage to which we have referred, defining the humanity of the

Savior, as a "Tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building." And if, without any overstraining of the text, it should appear that "the true tabernacle," whereof Christ is the minister, may also be expounded of his spotless humanity, we should gladly adopt the interpretation as sustaining us in our contest with impugners of his divinity.

There is, at first sight, so much resemblance between the passages, that we are naturally inclined to claim for them a sameness of meaning. In the one, the tabernacle is described as that "which the Lord pitched and not man;" in the other, as "not made with hands," that is to say, "not of this building." It is scarcely possible that the coincidence could be more literal; and the inference seems obvious, that, the latter tabernacle being Christ's humanity, so also must be the former. Yet a little reflection will suggest that, however correct the expression, that Christ's humanity was the tabernacle by, or in, which he came, there would be much of harshness in the figure, that this humanity is the tabernacle of which he is the minister. Without doubt, it is in his human nature that the Son of God officiates above. He carried up into glory the vehicle of his sufferings, and made it partaker of his triumphs. And our grand comfort in the priesthood of Jesus results from the fact that he ministers as a man; nothing else affording ground of assurance that "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Heb. 4: 15. But whilst certain, and rejoicing in the certainty, that our intercessor pleads in the humanity, which, undefiled by either actual or original sin, qualified him to receive the outpourings of wrath, we could not, with any accuracy, say that he is the minister of this humanity. It is clear that such expression must define, in some way, the place of ministration. And since humanity was essential to the constitution of Christ's person, we see not how it could be the temple of which he was appointed the minister. At least we must allow, that, in interpreting our text of the human nature of the Son of God, we should lie open to the charge of advocating an unnatural meaning, and of being so bent on upholding a

favorite hypothesis, as not to be over-scrupulous as to means of support.

We dismiss, therefore, as untenable, the opinion which our wishes would have led us to espouse, and must seek elsewhere than in the humanity of Christ, for "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." The most correct and simple idea appears to be, that, inasmuch as Christ is the high priest of all who believe upon his name, and inasmuch as believers make up his church, the whole company of the faithful constitute that tabernacle of which he is here asserted the minister. If we adopt this interpretation, we may trace a fitness and accuracy of expression which can scarcely fail to assure us of its justice. The Jewish tabernacle, unquestionably typical of the christian church, consisted of the outer part and the inner; the one open to the ministrations of inferior priests, the other to those of the high priest alone. Thus the church, always one body, whatever the dispersion of its members, is partly upon earth where Christ's ambassadors officiate, partly in heaven where Christ himself is present. St. Paul, referring to this church as a household, describes Christ Jesus as him "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named;" Eph. 3: 15; intimating that it was no interference with the unity of this family, that some of its members resided above, whilst others remained, as warriors and sufferers, below. So that, in considering Christ's church as the tabernacle with its holy place, and its holy of holies—the first on earth, the second in heaven—we adhere most rigidly to the type, and, at the same time, preserve harmony with other representations of Scripture.

And when you remember that Christ is continually described 'as dwelling in his people, and that believers are represented as "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit," Eph. 2: 22, there will seem to be none of that objection against this interpretation which we felt constrained to urge against the former. If it be common to represent believers, whether singly or collectively, as the temple of God; and if, at the same time, Christ Jesus, as the high priest of our profession, preside at the altar, and hold the censor of this temple; then we suppose nothing

far-fetched, we only keep up the imagery of Scripture, when we take the church as that "true tabernacle" whereof the Redeemer is the minister.

And when we yet further call to mind that to God alone is the conversion of man ascribed throughout Scripture, we see, at once, the truth of the account given of this tabernacle, that the Lord pitched it and not man. Man reared the Jewish tabernacle, and man builded the Jewish temple. But the spiritual sanctuary, of which these were but types and figures, could be constructed by no human architect. A finite power is inadequate to the fashioning and collecting living stones, and to the weaving the drapery of self-denial and obedience. We refer, undividedly, to Deity the construction of this true tabernacle, the church. Had there been no mediatorial interference, the spiritual temple could never have been erected. In the work and person of Christ were laid the foundation of this temple. "Behold, saith God, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone." Isa. 28: 16. And on the stone thus laid there would have arisen no superstructure, had not the finished work of redemption been savingly applied, by God's Spirit, to man's conscience. Though redeemed, not a solitary individual would go on to be saved, unless God recreated him after his own likeness. So that, whatever the breadth which we give to the expression, it must hold good of Christ's church, that the Lord pitched it and not man. And it is not more true of Christ's humanity, mysteriously and supernaturally produced, that it was a tabernacle which Deity reared, than of the company of believers, born again of the Spirit and renewed after God's image, that they constitute a sanctuary which shows a nobler than mortal workmanship.

Now, upon the grounds thus briefly adduced, we shall consider, through the remainder of our discourse, that "the true tabernacle," whereof Christ is the minister, denotes the whole church, whether in earth or heaven, of the redeemed, made one by union, through faith, with the Redeemer. But before considering, at greater length, the senses in which Christ is the minister of this tabernacle, we would remark on his being styled "Minister," and not



“High Priest.” We shall find, in the sequel, that this change of title is too important to be overlooked, and that we must give it our attention, if we would bring out the full meaning of the passage. The word translated “minister,” denotes properly any public servant, whatever the duties committed to his care. His office, or his ministry, is any business undertaken for the sake of the commonwealth. Hence, in the New Testament, the word rendered “ministry” is transferred to the public office of the Levites and Priests, and afterwards to the sacerdotal office of Christ. We keep the Greek word in our own language, but confine it to the business of the sanctuary, describing as “a Liturgy” a formulary of public devotions. When Christ, therefore, is called the minister of the tabernacle, a broader office seems assigned him than when styled the High Priest. As the High Priest of his church, he is alone; the functions of the office being such as himself only can discharge. But as the minister of his church, he is indeed supreme, but not alone; the same title being given to his ambassadors; as when St. Paul describes himself as the “minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God.” Rom. 15: 16. You will perceive, at once, from this statement, that our text ought not to be expounded as though “Minister” and “High Priest” were identical titles. No force is then attached to a word, of whose application to Christ this verse is the solitary instance. Indeed we are persuaded that much of the power and beauty of the passage lies in the circumstance, that Christ is called “the Minister of the true tabernacle,” and not the High Priest. If “the true tabernacle” be, as we seem to have ascertained, the whole church of the redeemed, that part of the church which is already in glory appears to have no need of Christ as a priest; and we may search in vain for the senses which the passage would bear, when applied to this part. But if Christ’s *priestly* functions, properly so called, relate not to the church in heaven, it is altogether possible that his *ministerial* may; so that there is, perhaps, a propriety in calling him the minister of that church, which there would not be in calling him the High Priest.

We shall proceed, therefore, to explain our text on the two assumptions, for each of which we have shown you a reason. We assume, in the first place, that “the true tabernacle” is the collective church of the redeemed, whether in earth or heaven: in the second, that the office of minister, though including that of high priest, has duties attached to it which belong specially to itself. These points, you observe, we assume, or take for granted, through the remainder of our discourse; and we wish them, therefore, borne in mind, as ascertained truths.

In strict conformity with these assumptions, we shall now speak to you, in the first place, of Christ as minister of the church on earth; in the second place, of Christ as minister of the church in heaven.

Now it is of first-rate importance that we consider Christ as withdrawn only from the eye of sense, and, therefore, present as truly, after a spiritual manner, with his church, as when, in the day of humiliation, he moved visibly upon earth. The lapse of time has brought no interruption of his parting promise to the apostles, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matt. 28: 20. He has provided, by keeping up a succession of men who derive authority, in unbroken series, from the first teachers of the faith, for the continued preaching of his word, and administration of his sacraments. And thus he hath been, all along, the great minister of his church: delegating, indeed, power to inferior ministers who “have the treasure in earthen vessels;” 2 Cor. 4: 7; but superintending their appointments as the universal bishop, and evangelizing, so to speak, his vast diocese, through their instrumentality. We contend that you have no true idea of a church, unless you thus recognize in its ordinances, not merely the institution of Christ, but his actual and energizing presence. You have no right, when you sit down in the sanctuary, to regard the individual who addresses you as a mere public speaker, delivering an harangue which has precisely so much worth as it may draw from its logic and its language. He is an ambassador from the great Head of the church, and derives an authority from this Head, which is quite inde-

pendent of his own worthiness. If Christ remain always the minister of his church, Christ is to be looked at through his ministering servant, whoever shall visibly officiate. And though there be a great deal preached in which you cannot recognize the voice of the Savior; and though the sacraments be administered by hands which seem impure enough to sully their sanctity; yet do we venture to assert, that no man, who keeps Christ steadfastly in view as the "minister of the true tabernacle," will ever fail to derive profit from a sermon, and strength from a communion. The grand evil is that men ordinarily lose the chief minister in the inferior, and determine beforehand that they cannot be advantaged; unless the inferior be modelled exactly to their own pattern. They regard the speaker simply as a man, and not at all as a messenger. Yet the ordained preacher is a messenger, a messenger from the God of the whole earth. His mental capacity may be weak—that is nothing. His speech may be contemptible—that is nothing. His knowledge may be circumscribed—we say not that is nothing. But we say that, whatever the man's qualifications, he should rest upon his office. And we hold it the business of a congregation, if they hope to find profit in the public duties of the Sabbath, to cast away those personal considerations which may have to do with the officiating individual, and to fix steadfastly their thoughts on the office itself. Whoever preaches, a congregation would be profited, if they sat down in the temper of Cornelius and his friends: "now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Acts, 10: 33.

But if a sermon differ from what a Gospel sermon should be, men will determine that Christ could have had nothing to do with its delivery. Now this, we assert, is nothing less than the deposing Christ from the ministry assigned him by our text. We are far enough from declaring that the chief minister puts the false words into the mouth of the inferior. But we are certain, as upon a truth which to deny is to assault the foundations of christianity, that the chief minister is so mindful of his office that every man, who listens in faith,

expecting a message from above, shall be addressed through the mouth, ay, even through the mistakes and errors, of the inferior. And in upholding this truth, a truth attested by the experience of numbers, we simply contend for the accuracy of that description of Christ which is under review. If, wheresoever the minister is himself deficient and untaught, so that his sermons exhibit a wrong system of doctrine, you will not allow that Christ's church may be profited by the ordinance of preaching; you clearly argue that the Redeemer has given up his office, and that he can no longer be styled the "minister of the true tabernacle." There is no middle course between denying that Christ is the minister, and allowing that, whatever the faulty statements of his ordained servant, no soul, which is hearkening in faith for a word of counsel or comfort, shall find the ordinance worthless and be sent away empty.

And from this we obtain our first illustration of our text. We behold the true followers of Christ enabled to find food in pastures which seem barren, and water where the fountains are dry. They obtain indeed the most copious supplies—though, perhaps, even this will not always hold good—when the sermons breathe nothing but truth, and the sacraments are administered by men of tried piety and faith. But when every thing seems against them, so that, on a carnal calculation, you would suppose the services of the church stripped of all efficacy, then, by acting faith on the head of the ministry, they are instructed and nourished; though, in the main, the given lesson be falsehood, and the proffered sustenance little better than poison. And if Christ be thus always sending messages to those who listen for his voice; if he so take upon himself the office of preacher as to constrain even the tongue of error to speak instruction to his people; and if, over and above this conveyance of lessons by the most unpromising vehicle, he be dispensing abundantly, by his faithful ambassadors, the rich nutriment of sound and heavenly doctrine—every sermon, which speaks truth to the heart being virtually a homily of Christ delivered by himself, and every sacrament, which transmits grace, an ordinance of Christ superintended by himself—why,



a fidelity the most extraordinary must be allowed to distinguish the description of our text; and Christ, though removed from visible ministration, has yet so close a concernment with all the business of the sanctuary—uttering the word, sprinkling the water, and breaking the bread, to all the members of his mystical body—that he must emphatically be styled, “a minister of holy things, of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

But whilst the office of minister thus includes duties whose scene of performance is the holy place, there are others which can only be discharged in the holy of holies. These appertain to Christ under his character of High Priest; no inferior minister being privileged to enter “within the veil.” You must, we think, be familiar, through frequent hearing, with the offices of Christ as our Intercessor. You know that though he suffered but once, in the last ages of the world, yet, ever living to plead the merits of his sacrifice, he gives perpetuity to the oblation, and applies to the washing away of sin that blood which is as expiatory as in its first warm gushings. In no respect is it more sublimely true than in this, that Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” The high priests of Aaron’s line entered, year by year, into the holiest of all, making continually a new atonement “for themselves and for the errors of the people.” Heb. 9: 7. But he who was constituted “after the order of Melchisedec,” king as well as priest, entered in once, not “by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood,” Heb. 9: 12, and needed never to return and ascend again the altar of sacrifice. It is not that sin can now be taken away by any thing short of shedding of blood. But intercession perpetuates crucifixion. Christ, as high priest within the veil, so immortalizes Calvary that, though “he liveth unto God,” he dies continually unto sin. And thus, “if any man sin, we have,” saith St. John, “an advocate with the Father.” 1 John, 2: 1. But of what nature is his advocacy? If you would understand it you must take the survey of his atonement. It was a mighty exploit which the Mediator effected in the days of humiliation. He arose in the strength of that wondrous

coalition of Deity and humanity of which his person was the subject; and he took into his grasp the globe over whose provinces Satan expatiated as his rightful territory; and, by one vast impulse, he threw it back into the galaxy of Jehovah’s favor; and angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim sang the chorus of triumph at the stupendous achievement.

Now it is of this achievement that intercession perpetuates the results. We wish you to understand thoroughly the nature of Christ’s intercession. When Rome had thrown from her the warrior who had led his countrymen to victory, and galled and fretted the proud spirit of her boldest hero; he, driven onward by the demon of revenge, gave himself as a leader where he had before been a conqueror, and, taking a hostile banner into his passionate grasp, headed the foes who sought to subjugate the land of his nativity. Ye remember, it may be, how intercession saved the city. The mother bowed before the son; and Coriolanus, vanquished by tears, subdued by plaints, left the capitol unscathed by battle. Here is a precise instance of what men count successful intercession. But there is no analogy between this intercession and the intercession of Christ. Christ intercedes with justice. But the intercession is the throwing down his cross on the crystal floor of heaven, and thus proffering his atonement to satisfy the demand. Oh, it is not the intercession of burning tears, nor of half-choked utterance, nor of thrilling speech. It is the intercession of a broken body, and of gushing blood—of death, of passion, of obedience. It is the intercession of a giant leaping into the gap, and filling it with his colossal stature, and covering, as with a rampart of flesh, the defenceless camp of the outcasts. So that, not by the touching words and gestures of supplication, but by the resistless deeds and victories of Calvary, the Captain of our salvation intercedes: pleading, not as a petitioner who would move compassion, but rather as a conqueror who would claim his trophies.

Hence Christ is “able to save to the uttermost,” on the very ground that “he ever liveth to make intercession;” Heb. 7: 25; seeing that no sin can be committed for which the satisfaction,

made upon Calvary, proffers not an immediate and thorough expiation. And if, as the intercessor, or advocate, of his people, Christ Jesus may be said to stand continually at the altar-side; and if he be momentarily offering up the sacrifice which is momentarily required by their fast recurring guilt; is he not most truly a minister of the tabernacle? If, though the shadows of Jewish worship have been swept away, so that, day by day, and year by year, a typical atonement is no longer to be made, the constant commission of sin demand, as it must demand, the constant pouring out of blood; and if, standing not indeed in a material court, and offering not the legal victims, but, nevertheless, officiating in the presence of God, "a lamb as it had been slain," Rev. 5: 6, the Redeemer present the oblation prescribed for every offence and every short-coming; is not the whole business of the tabernacle which man pitched transacted over again, and that too every instant, in the tabernacle which God pitched; and, Christ, being the high priest who alone presides over this expiatory process, how otherwise shall we describe him than as the "minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man?"

But once more. We may regard the prayers and praises of real believers as incense burnt in the true tabernacle, and rising in fragrant clouds towards heaven. Yet who knows not that this incense, though it be indeed nothing less than the breathings of the Holy Spirit, is so defiled by the corrupt channel of humanity through which it passes, that, unless purified and etherealized, it can never be accepted of God? The Holy Ghost, as well as Christ Jesus, is said to make intercession for us. But these intercessions are of a widely different character. The Spirit pleads not for us as Christ pleads, holding up a cross, and pointing to wounds. The intercession of the Spirit is an intercession made within ourselves, and through ourselves. It is the result of the Spirit's casting himself into our breasts, and there praying for us by instructing us to pray for ourselves. Thus real prayer is the Spirit's breath; and what else is real praise? Real praise is the Spirit's throwing the heart into

the tongue; or rather, it is the sound produced, when the Spirit has swept the chords of the soul, and there is a correspondent vibration of the lip. But though prayer and praise be thus, emphatically, the breathings of the Holy Ghost, they ascend not up in their purity, because each of us is compelled to exclaim with Isaiah, "Wo is me, because I am a man of unclean lips." Isaiah, 6: 5. Even the voice of the interceding Spirit, when proceeding from that tongue which "is a fire, a world of iniquity," James 3: 6, penetrates not the holy of holies, unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, give it wings and gain it access. The atmosphere, so to speak, which is round the throne of the Eternal One, must be impervious to the incense burnt in the earthly tabernacle, unless moist with that mysterious dew which was wrung by anguish from the Mediator.

And how then shall we better represent the office which the Intercessor executes than by saying, that he holds in his hands the censor of his own merits, and, gathering into it the prayers and praises of his church, renders them a sweet savor acceptable to the Father? Perfumed with the odor of Christ's propitiation, the incense mounts; and God, in his condescension, accepts the offering and breathes benediction in return. And what then, we again ask, is Christ Jesus but the "minister of the true tabernacle?" If it be the Intercessor who carries our prayers and praises within the veil, and, laying them on the glowing fire of his righteousness, causes a spicy cloud to ascend and cover the mercy-seat; does not this Intercessor officiate in the true tabernacle as did the high priest of old in the figurative; and have we not fresh attestation to the truth of the description, that Jesus is "a minister of holy things, of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man?"

We think that the several particulars thus adduced constitute a strong witness, so far as the church on earth is concerned, to the accuracy of the definition presented by our text. We have shown you that to all true believers Christ Jesus is literally the minister of the sanctuary, preaching through the preacher, and administering, through his hands, the sacraments. And though



we may be thought to have herein somewhat trenched on the office of the Spirit, we have, in no degree, transgressed the statements of Scripture. In the Book of Revelation, it is Christ who sends, through John, the sermons to the churches, who holds in his right hand the seven stars which represent the ministers of these churches, and who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks which represent the churches themselves. And though, unquestionably, it is the Spirit which carries home the word, the delivery of that word must be referred to the Savior. Thus, in a somewhat obscure passage of St. Peter, Christ is said to have gone by the Spirit, and "preached unto the spirits in prison." 1 Pet. 3: 19. And certainly what he did to the disobedient, he may justly be affirmed to do to the faithful. We have further shown you, that, as the high priest of his people, Christ offers up continual sacrifice, and burns sweet incense. And when you combine these particulars, you have virtually before you the Savior in the pulpit of the sanctuary, the Savior at the altar, the Savior with the censor; and thus, seeing that he officiates in the whole business of the divinely-pitched tabernacle, will you not confess him the minister of that tabernacle?

But, understanding by the "true tabernacle" the collective church of the redeemed, whether in heaven or on earth, we have yet to show you that Christ is the minister of the former portion as well as of the latter. You see, at once, that the "true tabernacle" cannot be what we have all along supposed, unless there be ministerial offices discharged by Christ towards the saints in glory. And we think that the overlooking the title of minister, or rather the identifying it with that of high priest, has caused the unsatisfactoriness of many commentaries on the passage. As High Priest of the spiritual temple, Christ can scarcely be said to execute any functions in which those who have entered into heaven are personally interested. They are beyond the power of sin, and therefore need not sacrifice. The music of their praises is rolled from celestial harps, and requires not to be melodized. But, when we take Christ as the minister, we may

observe respects in which, without adventuring on rash speculation, he may be said to discharge the same offices to the church above and the church below. We shall not presume to speak of what goes on in the holy of holies, with that confidence which is altogether unwarrantable, when discourse turns on transactions of which the outer court is the scene. But finding Christ described as the "minister of the true tabernacle," and considering this tabernacle as divided into sections, we only strive to be wise up to what is written, when, observing senses in which the name must be confined to the lower section, we search for others in which it may be extended to the upper.

And if Christ minister to the church below by discharging the office of preacher or instructor, who shall doubt that he may also thus minister to the church above? We have already referred to a passage in St. Peter which speaks of Christ as having "preached to the spirits." We enter not into the controversies on this passage. But it gives, we think, something of foundation to the opinion, that whilst his body was in the sepulchre, Christ preached to spirits in the separate state, opening up to them, probably, those mysteries of redemption into which even angels, before-time, had vainly striven to look. The kings, and the prophets, and the righteous men, who had desired to see the things which apostles saw, and had not seen them, and to hear the things which they heard, and had not heard them—unto these, it may be, Christ brought a glorious roll of intelligence; and we can imagine him standing in the midst of a multitude which no man can number, who had all gone down to the chambers of death with but indistinct and far-off glimpses of the promised Messiah, and explaining to the eager assembly the beauty, and the stability, of that deliverance which he had just wrought out through obedience and blood-shedding. And, O, there must have thou gone forth a tide of the very loftiest gladness through the listening crowds of the separate state; and then, perhaps, for the first time, admiration and ecstasy summoning out the music, was heard that anthem, whose rich peal rolls down the coming eternity, "Worthy, wor-

thy, worthy is the Lamb." Then, it may be, for the first time, did Adam embrace all the magnificence of the promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; and Abraham understood how the well-being of the human population depended upon one that should spring from his own loins; and David ascertain all the meaning of mysterious strains, which, as prefiguring Messiah, he had swept from the harp-strings. Then, too, the long train of Aaron's line, who had stood at the altar and slain the victims, and burnt the incense, almost weighed down by a ritual, the import of whose ceremonies was but indistinctly made known—then, it may be, were they suddenly and sublimely taught the power of every figure, and the expressiveness of every rite; whilst the noble company of prophets, holy men who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. 1: 21, but who, rapt into the future, uttered much which only the future could develope—these, as though starting from the sleep of ages, sprang into the centre of that gorgeous panorama of truth which they had been commissioned to outline, but over whose spreadings there had rested the cloud and the mist; and Isaiah thrilled at the glories of his own saying, "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," Isaiah, 9: 6; and Hosea grasped all the mightiness of the declaration, which he had poured forth whilst denouncing the apostacies of Samaria, "O Death, I will be thy plagues; O Grave, I will be thy destruction." Hosea, 13: 14.

We know not why it may not thus be considered that the day of Christ's entrance into the separate state was, like the Pentecostal day to the church upon earth, a day of the rolling off of obscurity from the plan of redemption, and of the showing how "glory, honor, and immortality," Rom. 2: 7, were made accessible to the remotest of the world's families; a day on which a thousand types gave place to realities, and a thousand predictions leaped into fulfilment: a day, therefore, on which there circulated through the enormous gatherings of Adam and his elect posterity, already ushered into rest, a gladness which had never yet been reached in all the depth of their beatifical re-

pose. And neither, then, can we discover cause why Christ may not be thought to have filled the office of preacher to the buried tribes of the righteous, and thus to have assumed that character which he has never since laid aside, that of "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man."

We know but little of the condition of separate spirits: but we know, assuredly, from the witness of St. Paul, that they are "present with the Lord." 2 Cor. 5: 8. Whatever the dwelling-place which they tenant, whilst awaiting the magnificent things of a resurrection, the glorified humanity of the Savior is amongst them, and they are privileged to hold immediate communings with their Head. Thus the preacher, the mighty expounder of the will and purposes of the Father, moves to and fro through the admiring throng; and the souls of those who have loved and served the Redeemer upon earth, are no sooner delivered from the flesh, than they stand in the presence of that illustrious Being who spake as "never man spake." Is he silent? Was it only in the day of humiliation, and in the hour of trouble, that he had instruction to impart, and lessons to convey, and deep and glorious secrets to open up to the faithful? He who described himself as actually "straitened" whilst on earth, who had many things to say which his hearers were not able to bear—think ye that, in a nobler scene, and with spirits before him, all whose faculties have been wonderously enlarged and sublimed, he delivers not the homilies of a mightier teaching, and leads not on his people to loftier heights of knowledge, and broader views of truth? Oh, we cannot but believe that the glorified Redeemer converses—though thought cannot scan such mysterious and majestic converse—with those blessed beings who "have washed their robes and made them white," Rev. 7: 14, in his blood; that he unfolds to them the wonders of redemption; and teaches them the magnificence of God; and spreads out to their contemplation the freight of splendor wherewith the second Advent is charged; and carries them to Pisgah tops, whence they look down upon the landscapes, burning with the purple and the gold,



across which they shall pass when attired in the livery of the resurrection—thus making the place of separate spirits a church, himself the preacher, immortality his text. Yea, when we think on the countless points of difference and debate between men who, in equal sincerity, love the Lord Jesus; when we observe how those, who alike place all their hopes on the Mediator, hold opposite opinions on many doctrines; and when we yet further remember, that a long life-time of study and prayer leaves half the Bible unexplored; there is so much to be unravelled, so much to be elucidated, so much to be learned, that we can suppose the Redeemer, day by day—if days there be where the sun never sets—imparting fresh intelligence to the enraptured assembly, and causing new gladness to go the round of the crowded ranks, as he expounds a difficulty, and justifies the ways of God to man.

And whether or no we be overbold in even hinting at the possible subject-matter of discourse, we only vindicate the title which our text gives to the Savior, when we conclude that as the God-man passes through “the general assembly and church of the first-born,” Heb. 12: 23, he wraps not himself up in silence and loneliness; but that speaking, as he spake with the disciples journeying to Emmaus, he opens wonders, and causes every heart to burn and bound. So that, removed as is the church within the veil from the ken of our observation, and needing not, as it cannot need, those deeds of an intercessor, which engage chiefly, in our own case, the ministry of Christ, we can yet be confident that in the Holy of Holies there goes onward a grand work of instruction; and thus ascertaining that, as a preacher to his people, Christ’s office is not limited to those who sojourn in the flesh, we can understand by the “true tabernacle” the church above conjointly with the church below, and yet pronounce, unreservedly, of Jesus, that he is a “minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man.”

Such, brethren, is our account of the title of our text, whether respect be had to believers in glory, or to believers still wandering upon earth. If we have dealt correctly with the passage, it fur-

nishes one great practical admonition, already incidentally mentioned, which it will be well that you keep diligently in mind. When you attend the services of the sanctuary, remember who is the minister of that sanctuary. You run to hear this man preach, and then that man. But who amongst you—let me speak it with reverence—comes in the humble, prayerful, faithful hope of hearing Christ preach? Yet Christ is the “minister of the true tabernacle.” Christ preaches, through his servants, to those who forget the instrument, and use meekly the ordinance.

It is a melancholy and dispiriting thing to observe how little effect seems wrought by preaching. We take the case of a crowded sanctuary, where the business of listening goes on with a more than common abstraction. We may have before us the rich exhibition of an apparently riveted attention; and the breathless stillness of a multitude shall give witness how they are hanging on the lips of the speaker. And if he grow impassioned, and pour out his oratory on things terribly sublime, the countenances of hundreds shall betray a convulsion of spirit—and if he speak glowingly of what is tender and beautiful, the sunniness in many eyes shall testify to their feeling an emotion of delightsomeness. But we are not to be carried away by the charms of this spectacle. We know too thoroughly, that, with the closing of the sermon, may come the breaking of the spell; and that it is of all things the most possible, that, if we pursued to their homes these earnest listeners, we should find no proof that impression had been made by the enunciated truths, and, perhaps, no more influential remembrance of the discourse, by whose power they had been borne completely away, than if they had sat fascinated by the loveliness of a melody, or awe-struck at the thunderings of an avalanche.

And the main reason of all this we take to be that men forget the ordinance, and look only to the instrument. If such be the case, it is no marvel that they derive nothing from preaching but a little animal excitement, and a little head-knowledge. If you listen not for the voice of Christ, who shall wonder that you hear only the voice of man, and so go away to your homes

with your souls unfed, simply equipped for sitting in judgment upon the sermon as you would upon a tragedy, and ready to begin the review with some caustic remark, which shall prove, that, whatever else you have learned, you have not learned charity?

Alas! the times on which we have fallen are so evil, that there is almost a total losing-sight of the ordinance of a visible church. Preaching is valued, not as Christ's mode of ministering to his people, and therefore always to be prized; but as an oratorical display, whose worth, like that of a pleading at the bar, is to be judged by the skill of the argument and the power of the language.

We can but point out to you the error. It must remain with yourselves to strive to correct it. "Cease ye from man." Isaiah 2: 22. When and where is this injunction so needful as in a church, and on a Sabbath? Every thing

is made to depend on the clergyman. And men will tell you that he is very good, but very dull; that his doctrine is sound, but his delivery heavy; that he is inanimate, or ungraceful, or flowery, or prosaic. But as to hearing that he is Christ's servant, an instrument in his Master's hands—who meets with this from the Dan to the Beersheba of our Israel? "Cease ye from man." If ye hope to be profited by preaching; if ye would become—and this is a noble thing—independent of the preacher; strive ye diligently to press home upon your minds, as ye draw nigh to the sanctuary, that Jesus Christ is the "minister of the true tabernacle." Thus shall ye be always secure of a lesson, and so be trained gradually for that inner court of the temple where, sitting down with patriarchs, and apostles, and saints, at the feet of the great Preacher himself, you shall learn, and enjoy, immortality.

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## SERMON III.

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### THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF CREATURE-MERIT.

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"For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."—I CHRONICLES, xxix, 14.

Full of years, of riches, and of honors, David, the man after God's own heart, is almost ready to be gathered to his fathers, and to exchange his earthly diadem for one radiant with immortality. Yet, ere he pass into his Maker's temple of the skies, he would provide large store of material for that terrestrial sanctuary, which, though it must not be reared by himself, he knew would be builded by Solomon. The gold and the silver, the onyx stones, and the stones of divers colors, and the marbles, these, and other less precious

commodities, the monarch of Israel had heaped together for the work; and now he summons the princes of the congregation to receive in trust the legacy.

Yet it was comparatively but little to bequeath the rich and costly produce of the earth; and David might have felt that a devoted and zealous spirit outweighed vastly the metal and the jewel. He indeed could leave behind him an abundance of all that was needful for the building in Jerusalem a house for the ark of the covenant; but



where was the piety, where the holiness of enterprise which should call in to being the fabric of his wishes ?

He will not then lie down in his grave without breathing over the rare and glittering heaps a stirring, yea, almost thrilling appeal ; demanding who, amid the assembled multitude, would emulate his example, and consecrate his service, that day, unto the Lord ? It augured well for the kingdom of Judea that its great men, and its nobles, answered to the call, as a band of devoted warriors to the trumpet-peal of loyalty. He who had provided rich garniture for the temple's walls, and glorious hymns to echo through its courts, had cause to lift up his voice with gladness, and bless the Lord, when the chief of the fathers, and the heads of the tribes, offered themselves willingly, and swelled, by the gift of their own possessions, the treasures already devoted to the sanctuary. He had now good earnest that the cherished promise was on the eve of fulfilment ; and that though, having himself shed blood, and been a man of war from his youth, it was not fitting that he should rear a dwelling-place for Deity, one who sprang from his own loins should be honored as the builder of a structure, into which Jehovah would descend with the cloudy majesty of a mystic Shekinah.

But, whilst glad of heart and rejoicing, David felt deeply how unworthy he was of the mercies which he had received, and how marvellous was that favor of Deity of which himself, and his people, had been objects. The nation had come forward, and, with a willing heart, dedicated its treasures to Jehovah. But the king, whilst exulting at such evidence of national piety, knew well that God alone had imparted the disposition to the people, and that, therefore, God must be thanked for what was offered to God. " Now, therefore," saith he, " our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? " Two things, you observe, excited his gratitude and surprise : first, that the people and himself should have so much to offer ; secondly, that over and above the ability, there should be the willingness, to

make so costly an oblation. He felt, that God had dealt wondrously with Israel in emptying into its lap the riches of the earth, and thus rendering it possible that piles of the precious and the beautiful might be given, at his summons, for the work of the temple. But then he also felt that the land might have groaned beneath the accumulations of wealth ; but that, had not the hearts of the people been made willing by God, no fraction of the enormous mass would have been yielded for the building which he longed to see reared. God had given both the substance, and the willingness to consecrate it to his service. And when David felt the privilege of a temple being allowed to rise in Jerusalem, and, at the same time, remembered how entirely it was of God that there was either the ability, or the readiness, to build the structure ; he might well burst into the exclamation, " Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? " and then add, in the words of our text, " For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."

You may thus perceive the connection between the words on which we are to meditate, and those which immediately precede. David, as we have shown you, expressed surprise on two accounts, each of which is indicated by our text. He marvels that God should have blessed the people with such abundance, and explains why he ascribes the abundance to God, by saying, " All things come of thee." But he is also amazed at the condescension of God in giving willingness, as well as ability, to the people. God needed not to receive at the creature's hands, and, therefore, it was pure love which moved him thus to influence the heart. Nothing could be presented to him which was not already his ; and might not then David be justly overpowered by the graciousness of God, seeing that, however noble the offering, " of *thine own* have we given thee," must be the confession by which it was attended ?

There will be no necessity, after having thus stated the occasion on which the text was delivered, and the meaning which it originally bore, that

we refer again to the preparations of David for building the temple. It is evident that the words are of most general applicability, and that we need not take account of the circumstances of the individual who first uttered them, when we would interpret their meaning, or extract their lessons. We shall, therefore, proceed to consider the passage as detached from the context, and as thus presenting us with truths which concern equally every age and every individual.

We regard the words before us as resisting, with singular power, the notion that a creature can merit. We know not the point in theology which requires to be oftener stated, or more carefully established, than the impossibility that a creature should merit at the hands of the Creator. It is not to be controverted that men are disposed to entertain the opinion that creature-merit is possible, so that they have it in their power to effect something deserving recompense from God. They will not indeed always set the point of merit very high. They will rather imitate the Pharisee in the parable, who evidently thought himself meritorious for stopping a degree or two short of being scandalous. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers." Luke, 18: 11. But whether it be at a low point or a lofty, that merit is supposed to commence, every man must own as his natural sentiment that it commences at some point; and each one of us, if he have ever probed his own heart, will confess himself prone to the persuasion, that the creature can lay the Creator under obligation. We find ourselves able to deserve well of one another, to confer favors, and to contract debts. And when we carry up our thoughts from the finite to the infinite, we quite forget the total change in the relationship; and we perceive not that the position in which we stand to our Maker excludes those deservings which, unquestionably, have place between man and man. Men simply view God as the mightiest of sovereigns, and, knowing it possible to do a favor to their king, conclude it possible to do a favor to their God.

Now it must be of first-rate importance that we ascertain the truth or the

falsehood of such a conclusion. The method in which we may look to be saved will greatly vary, according as we admit, or deny, the possibility of merit. It is quite clear that our moral position, if we cannot merit, must be vastly different from what it is, if we can merit, and that, consequently, the apparatus of deliverance cannot, in the two cases, be the same. So that it is no point of curious and metaphysical speculation, whether merit be consistent with creatureship. On the contrary, there cannot be a question whose decision involves inferences of greater practical moment. If I can merit, salvation may be partly of debt, and I may earn it as wages. If I cannot merit, salvation must be wholly of grace, and I must receive it as a gift. And thus every dispute upon justification by faith, every debate in reference to works as a procuring cause of acceptance, would virtually be settled by the settlement of the impossibility of creature-merit. Questions such as these are best determined by reference to first principles. And if you had once demonstrated that merit is inconsistent with creatureship, you would have equally demonstrated that neither faith, nor works, can procure man's salvation in the way of desert; but that, whatever the instrumentality through which justification is effected, justification itself must be wholly of grace.

Now we think, that, in examining the words of our text, we shall find powerful reasons from which to conclude the impossibility of merit. The text may be said to state a fact, and then an inference from that fact. The fact is, that "All things come of God:" the inference is, that a creature can give God nothing which is not already his own. We will examine successively the fact, and the inference; and then apply the passage to the doctrine which we desire to establish.

We are, in the first place, to speak on the stated fact, that all things come of God.

Now there is nothing more wonderful in respect to Deity than that universality of operation which is always ascribed to him. One grand distinction between the infinite being, and all finite beings, appears to us to be, that the one can be working a thousand things



at once, whilst the energies of the others must confine themselves to one work at one time. If you figure to yourselves the highest of created intelligences, you endow him with a might which leaves immeasurably behind the noblest human powers; but you never think of investing him with the ability of acting, at the same time, on this globe, and on one of those far-off planets which we see travelling around us. You make, in short, the strength of an archangel by multiplying the strength of a man. But, whatever the degree up to which you think it needful to multiply, you never add to the strength the incomprehensible property, that it may be exerting itself, at the same moment, in places between which there is an untravelling separation, and causing its mightiness to be simultaneously felt in the various districts of a crowded immensity. If you even multiplied finite power till you supposed it to become infinite, you would only keep adding to its intensesness, and would in no degree attribute to it ubiquity. And, however you might suppose this multiplied power capable of wonders which seem to demand the interpositions of Deity, you would still consider, that these wonders must be performed in succession; and you would never imagine of the power, that, in the depths of every ocean, and on the surface of every star, it could, at the same instant, be putting forth its magnificent workings.

And thus it is that the Omnipresence of Godhead is that property, which, more than any other, outruns our conceptions. In multiplying power, so to speak, you never multiply presence. But when you had even wrought up the idea of a power which can create, and annihilate, you would give it one thing to create at once, and one thing to annihilate at once; and you would never suppose it busy equally, in all its glory and all its resistlessness, in every department of an universe, and with every fraction of infinity.

So that the topmost marvel is that "*All things come of God.*" The unapproachable mystery—it is not that God should be in the midst of this sanctuary, and that he should be ministering life to those gathered within its walls—it is, that he should be no more here than he is elsewhere, and

no more elsewhere than he is here; and that with as actual a concentration of energy as though he had no other occupation, he should be supplying our fast-recurring necessities; and yet that, with such a diffusion of presence as causes him to be equally every where, he should superintend each district of creation, and give out vitality to each order of beings. "*All things come of God.*" It is not merely that all things come of God by original production; all things come of God by after-sustainment. And whether you consider the visible world, or the invisible; whether you extend your thoughts over the unmeasured fields of materialism, or send them to the survey of those countless ranks of intelligence which stretch upwards between yourselves and your Maker—you are bound to the belief that every spot in the unlimited space, and every member of the teeming assemblage, requires and receives the operations of Deity; and that if, for a lonely instant, those operations were suspended, worlds would jostle and make a new chaos, while a disastrous bankruptcy of life would succeed to the present exuberance of animation.

So that it is as true of the angelic hosts, moving in their power and their purity, as of ourselves, fallen from immortality, and beggared, and weakened, that "*all things come of God.*" There can be but one independent being, and on that one all others must depend. An independent being must, necessarily, be self-existent, possessing in himself all the well-springs of life, and all the sources of happiness. A being whose existence is derived must, as necessarily, be dependent on the first author for the after-continuance. A being who could do without God would himself be God; and there needs no argument to prove to you, that, whatever else God could make, he could not make himself. And you must take it, therefore, as a truth which admits not limitation, that "*all things come of God;*" so that there is not the order of creatures, whether material or immaterial, which stands not, every moment, indebted for every thing to God, or which, however rare its endowments, and however majestic its possessions, could dispense, for one instant, with communications from the

fulness of the Almighty, or be thrown on its own energies, without being thrown to darkness and destruction.

And though it suit not our purpose that we should dwell long on the fact that "all things come of God," yet, associated as this fact is with whatsoever is most wonderful in Deity, we may call upon you to admire it, before we proceed to the inference which it furnishes. It is an august and an overpowering thought, that our God should be alike present on every star, and in each of its minutest recesses; and that, though there be a vast employment of the mechanism of second causes, there is not wrought a beneficial effect throughout the boundless expansions of creation, whose actual authorship can be referred to any thing short of the first great cause. It is a noble contemplation, though one by which our faculties are presently confounded, that of the whole universe hanging upon Deity; archangel, and angel, and man, and beast, and worm, receiving momentary supplies from the same inexhaustible fountain; and every tenant of every system appealing to the common parent to preserve it, each instant, from extinction. Oh, we take it for a cold, and a withered heart, which is conscious of no unusual and overcoming emotions, when there is told forth the amazing fact, that the God, who hearkens to the prayer of the meanest and most despised, and who is verily present, in all his omnipotence, when invoked by the very poorest of the children of calamity, should be actuating, at the same moment, all the machinery of the universe, and inspiring all its animation; guiding the rollings of every planet, and the leap of every cataract, and dealing out existence to every thing that breatheth. We say again that it is this property of God, the property of acting every where at once, so that all things come of him, which removes him furthest from companionship with the finite, and makes him inaccessible to all the soarings of the creature. It is the property to which we have nothing analogous amongst ourselves, even on the most reduced and miniature scale. A creature must be local. He must cease to act in one place before he can begin to act in another. But the Creator knows nothing whether

of distance or time. Inhabiting sublimely both infinity and eternity, there cannot be the spot in space, nor the instant in duration, when and where he is not equally present. And seeing that he thus occupies the universe, not as being diffused over it, but as existing, in all his integrity, in its every division and subdivision; and, seeing, moreover, that he waits not the passage of centuries, but is at "the end from the beginning;" Isaiah, 46 : 10; it can be literally true, without exaggeration, and without figure, that "all things come of him;" whatsoever there is of good being wrought by him, whatsoever of evil, permitted; the present being of his performance, and the future of his appointment.

And it is worth observing, that, if it must be the confession of every order of being that "all things," whatsoever they possess, "come of God," such confession must be binding, with a double force, upon man. It must be true of us, on the principles which prove it true generally of creatures, that we have nothing which we have not received, and for which, therefore, we stand not indebted to Deity. But then, by our rebellion and apostacy, there was a forfeiture, we say not of rights—for we deny that the creature can have right to any thing from the Creator—but of those privileges which God, in his mercy, conferred on the work of his hands. As a benevolent being, we may be sure that God would not call creatures into existence, and then dismiss them from his care and his guardianship. And though we pretend not to say that creatureship gave a positive claim on the Creator, it rendered it a thing on which we might venture to calculate, that, so long as the creature obeyed, the Creator would minister to his every necessity. But, as soon as there was a failure in obedience, it was no longer to be expected that creatureship would insure blessings. The instant that a race of beings declined from loyalty to God, there was nothing to be looked for but the suspension of all the outgoings of the Creator's beneficence; seeing that the law, entailed by creatureship, having been violated, the privileges to which it admitted were of necessity forfeited.

And this was the position in which



the human race stood, when, by the first transgression, God's service was renounced. Whatever the fairness with which Adam might have calculated, that, if he continued obedient, his every want would be supplied, he could not reckon, when he had broken the command, on a breath of air, or a ray of sunshine, or a particle of food. It was no longer, if we may use the expression, natural, that he should be upheld in being and sufficiency. On the contrary, the probability must have been that he would be immediately annihilated, or left to consume away piece-meal. And since, in spite of this forfeiture, we are still in the enjoyment of all the means and mercies of existence, we must be bound even far more than angels who never transgressed, to acknowledge that "all things come of God." Angels receive all things by the charter of creation. But man tore up that charter; and we should therefore receive nothing, had there not been given us a new charter, even the charter of redemption. So that God hath made a fresh and special arrangement on behalf of the fallen. And now, whatsoever we possess, whether it have to do with our intellectual part, or our animal, with the present life or the future, is delivered into our hands stamped, so to speak, with the sign of the cross; and we learn that "all things come of God," because all things, even the most common and insignificant, flow through the channel of a superhuman mediation, and are sprinkled with the blood to which Divinity gave preciousness.

But we may consider that we have sufficiently examined the fact asserted in our text, and may pass on, secondly, to the inference which it furnishes.

This inference is—and you can require no argument to prove to you its justice—that we can give God nothing which is not already his. "All things come of thee, and of *thine own* have we given thee." You must perceive at once, that, if it be true of the creatures of every rank of intelligence, that they possess nothing which they have not received from God, they can offer nothing which is purely and strictly their own. But it is necessary that we examine, with something of attention, into the nature of God's gifts, in order to remove an objection which might be

brought against our statements. If one creature give a thing to another, he ceases to have property in the gift, and cannot again claim it as his own. If a man make me a present, he virtually cedes all title to the thing given; and if I were afterwards to restore him the whole, or a part, it would be of mine own, and not of his own, that I gave him. But if—for even amongst ourselves we may find a case somewhat analogous to that of the Creator in his dealings with creatures—if I were reduced to utter poverty, with no means whatsoever of earning a livelihood; and if a generous individual came forward, and gave me capital, and set me up in trade; and if, in mine after-prosperity, I should bring my benefactor some offering expressive of gratitude; it is clear that I might, with the strictest truth, say, "of thine own do I give thee." I should be indebted to my benefactor for what I was able to give; and, of course, that for which I stood indebted to him might be declared to be his. But even this case comes far short of that of the Creator and the creature. The creature belongs to God: and God, therefore, cannot give to the creature in that sense in which one creature may give to another. All that the creature is, and all that the creature has, appertains to God; so that, in giving, God alienates not his property in that which he bestows. If he own, so to speak, the angel, or the man, then whatever the angel or the man possesses belongs still to his proprietor; and though that proprietor may give things to be used, they must continue *his own*, in themselves and in their produce. If indeed it were possible that a creature could become the property of any other than the Creator, it might be also possible that a creature could possess what was not the Creator's. But as long as it is certain that no creature can have right to call himself his own—the fact of creation making him God's by an invulnerable title—it ought to be received as a self-evident truth, that no creature can possess a good thing which is his own. All which he receives from the bounty of God still belongs to God. So that if whatsoever is brilliant and holy in the universe combined to fashion an offering; if the depths of the mines were fathomed for the richest of me-

tals, and the starry pavilions swept of their jewellery, and the ranks of the loftiest intelligence laid under contribution; there could be poured no *gift* into the coffers of heaven; but the splendid oblation, thus brought to the Almighty, would be his before, as much as after presentation.

And this truth it is by which we look to demonstrate the impossibility of creature-merit. We will begin with the highest order of created intelligence, and we will ask you whether the angel, or the archangel, can merit of God? If one being merit of another, it must perform some action which it was not obliged to perform, and by which that other is advantaged. Nothing else, as you must perceive if you will be at the pains of thinking, can constitute merit. I do another a favor, and, therefore, deserve at his hands, if I do something by which he is profited, and which I was not obliged, by mere duty, to do. If either of these conditions fail, merit must vanish. If the other party gain nothing, he can owe me nothing; and if I have only done what duty prescribed, he had a right to the action, and cannot, therefore, have been laid under obligation.

Now if this be a just description of merit, can the angel or the archangel deserve any thing of God? We waive the consideration, that, if there be merit, God must be advantaged—though there lies in it the material of an overpowering proof that the notion of creature-merit is little short of blasphemous. Who can think of being profitable unto God, when he remembers the independence of Deity, and calls to mind that there was a time when the Creator had not surrounded himself with worlds and tribes, and when, occupied with glorious and ineffable communings, the Father, Son, and Spirit, reaped in from the deep solitudes of immensity as full a revenue of happiness as they now gather from its thickly-peopled circles? No creature can do without God. But God could have done without creatures. They were not necessary to God. There was no void in his blessedness which required the contributions of creatures before it could be filled up. And it must be absurd to talk of advantaging God, when we know that his magnificence and his happiness

would have been infinite, had he chosen to dwell forever in his sublime loneliness, and suffered not the stillness of the unmeasured expanse, full only of himself, to be broken by the hum of a swarming population.

But we waive this consideration. We fasten you to the fact, that a meritorious action must be an action of which duty demands not the performance. If the angel have spare time which belongs not to God; if the angel have material which belongs not to God; let the angel bestow that time upon that material, and let him bring the result as an oblation to his Maker; and there shall be merit in that oblation; and he shall gain a recompense on the plea of desert: according to the rule which an apostle hath laid down, "who hath first given to the Lord, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Romans, 11 : 35. If the angel have powers which he is under no obligation of consecrating to God; if they are mightier than suffice for duty; and if there be, therefore, an overplus which he is at liberty to bestow on some work of supererogation; let him employ these uncalled-for energies in extra and unprescribed service, and, doubtless, his claim shall not be unheeded when he gives in the additional and voluntary performance. But if the angel have time which belongs not to God; and if the angel have power which he is not required to dedicate to God; there is an end of the proved truth, "of *thine own* have we given thee." In determining the question, whether a creature can merit, we have nothing to do, abstractedly, with the magnificence of the energies of that creature, nor with the stupendousness of the achievements which he is capable of effecting. There is not of necessity, any greater reason why an angel should merit, because able to move a world, than why a worm should merit, because just able to crawl upon its surface. The whole question of the possibility of merit is a question of the possibility of outrunning duty. Unless duty be exceeded, every creature must receive, as applicable to himself, the words of the Savior, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants, (and, if unprofitable, certainly not meritorious;) we have done



that which was our duty to do." Luke, 17: 10.

And if duty thus exclude merit, the condition of the angel, as much as that of the worm, excludes merit. If all which the angel has belong to the Creator; if that noble intelligence which elevates him far above our own level be the property of God; if that awful might, which could strew the ground with the thousands of the Assyrian host, be communicated by Deity; if that velocity of flight, which fits him to go on embassages to the very outskirts of creation, be imparted by his Maker—there must be a demand, an inalienable demand, upon the angel, for every instant of his time, and for every fraction of his strength, and for every waving of his wing. Duty, the duty which is imposed upon him by the fact of his creatureship, can draw no frontier-line excluding from a required consecration to God the minutest item of those multiform possessions, which render him a splendid and masterful thing, the nearest approach to Divinity in all that interminable series of productions which bounded into being at the call of the Omnipotent.

So that the angel, just as much as the meanest of creatures, must say of all that he can bring to God, of *thine own* do I give thee. It is, indeed, a costlier offering than the human eye hath seen, or the human thought imagined. There is a fervor of affection, and a grasp of understanding, and a strenuousness of labor, ay, and an intensity of self-abasement and humility, which enter not into the best and purest of the oblations which are laid by ourselves at the feet of our Maker. But as there is not one jot less than duty prescribes, neither is there one jot more. God gave all which is brought to him. His the glowing love. His the soaring intellect. His the awful vigor. His the beautiful lowliness. And shall he be laid under obligation by his own? Shall he be bound to make return, because he hath received of his own? Oh, we may discuss, and debate, upon earth, the possibility, or the impossibility, of creature-merit. But we may be sure, that, if the question could be propounded to angels, the thought of merit would be rejected as treason. Standing in the immediate pre-

sence of their glorious Creator; privileged to gaze, so far as it is possible for creatures to gaze without being withered, on his unveiled lustres; and fraught with the consciousness, that, however wonderful their powers and capacities, they possess nothing which God did not give, and which God might not instantly withdraw—angels must feel that the attempt to deserve of the Almighty would be tantamount to an attempt to dethrone the Almighty, and that the supposing that more might be done than is demanded by duty, would be the supposing an eternity exhausted, and time left for some praiseworthy exploits. Angels must discern, with an acuteness of perception never reached by ourselves whilst hampered by corruption, that each energy in their endowment constitutes a requisition for a contribution of glory to Jehovah; and that the endeavor to employ it to the procuring greatness, or happiness, for themselves, would amount to a base and fatal prostitution, causing them to be ranked with the apostate. And thus, upon the simple principle that "all things come of God," and that only of *his own* can they give him, angels, who are vast in might, and brilliant in purity, would count it the breaking into rebellion to entertain the thought of the possibility of merit; and unless you could prove to them that God had given less than all, that there were abilities in their nature which they had derived from sources independent on Deity, and that, consequently, their duty towards God required not the dedication of every iota of every faculty; unless you could prove to them this,—and you might prove this, when you could show to them two Gods, two Creators, and parcel out between two Almighty the authorship of their surpassing endowments—you would make no way with your demonstration, that it was possible for an angel to deserve of God. You might accumulate your arguments. But as long as they reached not the point thus marked out, still, as the shining and potent beings came in from the execution of lofty commissions, and poured into the treasury of their Maker the noble contributions of his accomplished purposes, oh, they would veil their faces, and bow down in lowliness, and confess themselves

unprofitable; and in place of grounding a claim on the employment of their energies in the service of Jehovah, reverently declare that the non-employment would have deserved the fire and the rack; so that, throwing from them as impious the notion of merit, they would roll this chorus through the heavenly Temple, "all things come of thee, and of *thine own*, O God, have we given thee."

Now if we bring down our inquiry from the higher orders of intelligence to the lower, we, of course, carry with us the proof which has been advanced of the impossibility of merit. If we pass from the case of angels to that of men, we may fairly apply the results of our foregoing argument, and consider the one case as involved in the other. It will hardly be disputed, that, if creatureship exclude the possibility of merit from amongst angels, it must also exclude it from amongst men. We argue not, indeed, that merit is more out of the reach of one rank of beings than of another. We simply contend that with every rank of being merit is an impossibility; but, since a thing cannot be more than impossible, we, of course, do not speak of degrees of impossibility. And yet, undoubtedly, there is a sense in which an angel comes nearer merit than a man. An angel falls not short of duty, though it cannot exceed; and, therefore, it deserves nothing, neither wrath nor reward. A man, on the contrary, falls short of duty, and, therefore deserves wrath; though, even if he fell not short, he could not exceed, and, therefore, could not deserve reward. So that the angel goes further than the man. The angel fulfils duty, but cannot overstep. The man leaves a vast deal undone which he is required to do; and he must, at least, make up deficiencies, before he can think of an overplus. We may consider, then, that in proving the impossibility of creature-merit, when the creature is angelic, we have equally proved it, when the creature is human. And thus Heaven would have been as much a free-gift to Adam, had he never disobeyed by eating of the fruit, as it now is to the vilest of his descendants, with the treason-banner in his hand, and the leprosy spot on his forehead. Had Adam walked unflinchingly through

his probation-time, spurning back the tempter, and swerving not an iota from loyalty and love; and had he then appeared before his Maker, exclaiming, now, O God, I have *deserved* immortality; why, this very speech would, have been the death-knell of our creation; and Adam would as actually have fallen, and as actually have sent down the dark bequeathments of a curse to his latest posterity, by pretending to have merited because he had obeyed, as now that he led the van in rebellion, and, breaking a positive law, dislocated the happiness of a countless population.

We thus consider that the impossibility of human merit follows, as a corollary, on our demonstration of the impossibility of angelic. But we shall not content ourselves with inferring the one case from the other. Feeling deeply the importance of your understanding thoroughly why you cannot merit of God, we shall apply briefly our text to the commonly-presumed instances of human desert.

You will find one man thinking, that, if he repent, he shall be pardoned. In other words, he supposes that there is a virtue in repentance which causes it to procure forgiveness. Thus repentance is exhibited as meritorious; and how shall we simply prove that it is not meritorious? Why, allowing that man can repent of himself—which he cannot—what is the repentance on which he presumes? What is there in it of his own? The tears? they are but the dew of an eye which is God's. The sighs? they are but the heavings of a heart which is God's. The resolutions? they are but the workings of faculties which are God's. The amendment? it is but the better employment of a life which is God's. Where then is the merit? O, find something which is, at the same time, human and excellent in the offering, and you may speak of desert. But until then, away with the notion of there being merit in repentance, seeing that the penitent man must say, "All things come of thee, and of *thine own*, O God, do I give thee."

Again: some men will speak of being justified by faith, till they come to ascribe merit to faith. "By faith," is interpreted as though it meant, on account of faith; and thus the great



truth is lost sight of, that we are justified freely "through the redemption that is in Christ." Romans, 3 : 24. But how can faith be a meritorious act? What is faith but such an assent of the understanding to God's word as binds the heart to God's service? And whose is the understanding, if it be not God's? Whose is the heart, if it be not God's? And if faith be nothing but the rendering to God that intellect, and that energy, which we have received from God, how can faith deserve of God? Oh, as with repentance, so with faith; away with the notion of merit. He who believes, so that he can dare the grave, and grasp eternity, must pour forth the confession, "all things come of thee, and of *thine own*, O God, do I give thee."

And once more: what merit can there be in works? If you give much alms, whose is the money? "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts." Haggai, 2 : 8. If you mortify the body, whose are the macerated limbs? If you put sackcloth on the soul, whose is the chastened spirit? If you be moral, and honest, and friendly, and generous, and patriotic, whose are the dispositions which you exercise, whose the powers to which you give culture and scope? And if you only use God's gifts, can that be meritorious? You may say, yes—it is meritorious to use them aright, whilst others abuse them. But is it wickedness to abuse? Then it can only be duty to use aright; and duty will be merit when debt is donation. You may bestow a fortune in charity; but the wealth is already the Lord's. You may cultivate the virtues which adorn and sweeten human life; but the employed powers are the Lord's. You may give time and strength to the enterprises of philanthropy; each moment is the Lord's, each sinew is the Lord's. You may be upright in every dealing of trade, scrupulously honourable in all the intercourses of life; but "a just weight and balance are the Lord's, all the weights of the bag are his work." Prov. 16 : 11. And where then is the merit of works? Oh, throw into one heap each power of the mind, each energy of the body; use in God's service each grain of your substance, each second of your time; give to the Almighty every throb

of the pulse, every drawing of the breath; labor and strive, and be instant, in season and out of season, and let the steepness of the mountain daunt you not, and the swellings of the ocean deter you not, and the ruggedness of the desert appal you not, but on, still on, in toiling for your Maker; and dream, and talk, and boast of merit, when you can find the particle in the heap, or the shred in the exploit, which you may exclude from the confession, "all things come of thee, and of *thine own*, O God, have I given thee."

Now we would trust that the impossibility of creature-merit has thus been established as an inference from the statement of our text. We wish you thoroughly to perceive that merit is inconsistent with creature-ship. We do not merely prove that this, or that, order of being cannot merit. Merit is inconsistent with creatureship. A creature meriting of the Creator is an impossibility. When the archangel can merit, the worm may merit. And he alone who is independent; he who has received nothing; he who is every thing to himself, as well as every thing to the universe, his own fountain of existence, his own storehouse of happiness, his own harvest of glory; God alone can merit, and, therefore, God alone could redeem.

We have now only, in conclusion, to ask, whether you will keep back from God what is strictly his own? Will ye rob God, and pawn his time, and his talents, and his strength with the world? Will ye refuse him what, though it cannot be given with merit, cannot be denied without ruin? He asks your heart; give it him; it is his own. He asks your intellect; give it him; it is his own. He asks your money; give it him; it is his own. Remember the words of the apostle, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." 2 Cor. 6 : 20. Ye are not your own. Ye are bought even if ye perish. Your bodies are not your own, though you may enslave them to lust; they are God's, to be thrown to the rack. Your souls are not your own, though you may hide, and tarnish, and degrade their immortality; they are God's, to be chained down to the rock, that the waves of wrath may dash and break over them. Oh, we want you; nay, the spirits of the just want you;



and the holy angels want you: and the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost want you; all but the devil and ruined souls want you, to leave off defrauding the Almighty, and to give him *his own*, themselves, his by creation, his doubly by redemption. I must give God the body, I must give God the soul. I give him the body, if I clothe the tongue with his praises; if I yield not my members as instruments of unrighteousness; if I suffer not the fires of unhallowed passion to light up mine eye, nor the vampire of envy to suck the color from my cheek; if I profane not my hands with the gains of ungodliness; if I turn away mine ear from the scoffer, and keep under every appetite, and wrestle with every lust; making it palpable that I consider each limb as not destined to corruption, but intended for illustrious service, when, at the trumpet-blast of the resurrection, the earth's sepulchres shall be riven. And I give God the soul, when the understanding is reverently turned on the investigations of celestial truth; when the will is reduced to meek compliance with the Divine will; and when all the affections move so harmoniously with the Lord's that they fasten on the objects which occupy his. This it is to give God his own. O God! "*all things come of thee.*" The will to present ourselves must come of thee. Grant that will unto all of us, that we may consecrate unreservedly every thing to thy service, and yet humbly confess that of *thine own* alone do we give thee.

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## SERMON IV.

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### THE HUMILIATION OF THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.\*

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"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—PHILIPPIANS, ii. 8.

We have been spared to reach once more that solemn season at which our Church directs specially our attention to the sufferings and death of the Redeemer. There can never, indeed, be the time at which the contemplation of the offering-up of our great high priest is at all out of place. Knowing the foundation of every hope, our thoughts should be continually on that substitution of the innocent for the guilty which was made upon Calvary, when he "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," 1 Peter, 2:22, "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." 1 Pet. 2:24. It is still, however, most true, that the preaching Christ Jesus and him crucified, requires not, as it consists not in, the perpetual recurrence to the slaying of our surety. The preaching of the cross is not, necessarily, that preaching which makes most frequent mention of the cross. That is the preaching of the cross, and that is the preaching of Christ, which makes the crucifixion of the Son of God its groundwork; which offers no mercy, and exhorts to no duty, but on the distinct understanding that no

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\* I am indebted to Bishop SHERLOCK for much assistance in handling this and the following subject.

mercy could be obtained, had not a Mediator purchased it; no duty performed, had he not gained for us the power. But when the groundwork has been thoroughly laid, then, though it behooves us occasionally to refer to first principles, and to examine over again the strength of our basis, it is certainly not our business to insist continually on the presentation of sacrifice; just as if, this one article received, the whole were mastered of the creed of a christian.

For nothing do we more admire the services of our Church, than for the carefulness displayed that there be no losing sight of the leading doctrines of the faith. It may be said of the Clergy of the Church of England, that they are almost compelled by the Almanac, if not by a sense of the high duties of their calling, to bring successively before their congregations the prominent articles of Christianity. It is not left to their own option, as it comparatively would be if they were not fastened to a ritual, to pass a year without speaking of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, or of the outpouring of the Spirit. If they be disposed to keep any of these matters out of their discourses, the Collects bring the omitted doctrines before the people, and convict the pastors of unfaithfulness. A dissenting congregation may go on for years, and never once be directed to the grand doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. They are dependent on their minister. He may advance what he chooses, and keep back what he chooses; for he selects his own lessons, as well as his own texts. An established congregation is not thus dependent on its minister. He may be an Unitarian in his heart; but he must be so far a Trinitarian to his people as to declare from the desk, even if he keep silence in the pulpit, that "the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity."\* And thus, whatever the objections which may be urged against forms of prayer, we cannot but think that a country without a liturgy is a country which lies open to all the incursions of heresy.

We obey, then, with thankfulness, the

appointment of our Church, which turns our thoughts specially at particular times on particular doctrines; not at any season excluding their discussion, but providing that, at least once in the year, each should occupy a prominent place.

We would lead you, therefore, now to the survey of the humiliation of the man Christ Jesus, and thus take a step in that pilgrimage to Gethsemane and Calvary which, at the present time, is enjoined on the faithful.

We bring before you a verse from the well-known passage of Scripture which forms the epistle of the day, and which furnishes some of our strongest arguments against those who deny the divinity of Christ. It cannot well be disputed, whatever the devised subterfuges for avoiding the inferences, that St. Paul speaks of the Mediator in three different states; a state of glory, when he was "in the form of God;" a state of humiliation, when he assumed "the form of a servant;" a state of exaltation, when there was "given him a name which is above every name." It is further evident, that the state of glory preceded the state of humiliation; so that Christ must have pre-existed in the form of God, and not have begun to exist when appearing on earth in the form of a servant. Indeed the apostle is inculcating humility, and enforcing his exhortation by the example of the Savior. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." You can require no proof that the strength of this exhortation lies in the fact, that Christ displayed a vast humility in consenting to become man; and that it were to take from it all power, and all meaning, to suppose him nothing more than a man. It is surely no act of humility to be a man; and no individual can set an example of humility by the mere being a man. But if one who pre-exists in another rank of intelligence become a man, then, but not otherwise, there may be humility, and consequently example, in his manhood.

We can, however, only suggest these points to your consideration, desiring that you may be led to give to the whole passage that attention which it

\* Athanasian Creed.



singularly deserves. We must confine ourselves to the single verse which we have selected as our text, and which, in itself, is so full of information that there may be difficulty in giving to each part the requisite notice.

The verse refers to the Redeemer in his humiliation, but cannot, as we shall find, be fairly interpreted without taking for granted his pre-existent glory. St. Paul, you observe, speaks of Christ as "found in fashion as a man," and as then *humbling* himself, so as to become "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It will be well that we advance a few remarks on the phrase "found in fashion as a man," before we consider that act of humility here ascribed to the Savior.

Now the true humanity of the Son of God is as fundamental an article of Christianity as his true divinity. You would as effectually demolish our religion by proving that Christ was not real man, as by proving that Christ was not real God. We must have a mediator between God and man; and "a mediator is not a mediator of one," Gal. 3 : 20, but must partake of the nature of each. Shall we ever hesitate to pronounce it the comforting and sustaining thing to the followers of Christ, that the Redeemer is, in the strictest sense, their kinsman? We may often be required, in the exercise of the office of an ambassador from God, to set ourselves against what we count erroneous doctrines touching the humanity of the Savior. But shall it, on this account, be supposed that we either underrate, or keep out of sight, this mighty truth of Christianity, that the Son of God became as truly, and as literally, man, as I myself am man. We cannot, and we will not, allow that there was in him that fountain of evil which there is in ourselves. We contend that the absence of the fountain, and not the mere prevention of the outbreak of its waters, is indispensable to the constitution of such purity as belonged to the holy child Jesus. But that he was like myself in all points, my sinfulness only excepted; that his flesh, like mine, could be lacerated by stripes, wasted by hunger, and torn by nails; that his soul, like mine, could be assaulted by temptation, harassed by Satan, and disquieted under the hidings of the countenance

of the Father; that he could suffer every thing which I can suffer, except the remorse of a guilty conscience; that he could weep every tear which I can weep, except the tear of repentance; that he could fear with every fear, hope with every hope, and joy with every joy, which I may entertain as a man, and not be ashamed of as a Christian; there is our creed on the humanity of the Mediator. If you could once prove that Christ was not perfect man—bearing always in mind that sinfulness is not essential to this perfectness—there would be nothing worth battling for in the truth that Christ was perfect God: the only Redeemer who can redeem, like the Goel under the law, my lost heritage, being necessarily my kinsman; and none being my kinsman who is not of the same nature, born of a woman, of the substance of that woman, my brother in all but rebellion, myself in all but unholiness.

We are bound, therefore, to examine, with all care, expressions which refer to the humanity of the Savior, and especially those which may carry the appearance of impugning its reality. Now it is remarkable, and could not be without design, that St. Paul uses words which go not directly to the fact of the reality of the humanity, but which might almost be thought to evade that fact. He does not broadly and roundly assert, that Christ was man. He takes what, at least, may be called a circuitous method, and uses three expressions, all similar, but none direct. "Took upon him the form of a servant." "Was made in the likeness of men." "Being found in fashion as a man." There must, we say, have been some weighty reason with the apostle why he should, as it were, have avoided the distinct mention of Christ's manhood, and have employed language which, to a certain extent, is ambiguous. Why speak of the "form of a servant," or the "likeness of men," and of "being found in fashion as a man," when he wished to convey the idea that Christ was actually a servant, and literally a man?

We will, first of all, show you that these expressions, however apparently vague and indefinite, could never have been intended to bring into question the reality of Christ's humility. The apostle employs precisely the same kind of



language in reference to Christ's divinity. He had before said of the Savior, "who being in the *form of God*." If then "the likeness of men," or "the form of a servant," implied that Christ was not really man, or not really a servant, "the form of God" would imply that he was not really God. The several expressions must have a similar interpretation. And if, therefore, Christ was not really man, Christ was not really God; and what then was he? Neither man, nor God is a conclusion for which no heretic is prepared. All admit that he was God separately, or man separately, or God and man conjointly. And therefore the expressions, "form of God," "form of a servant," must mean literally God, and literally a servant; otherwise Christ was neither divine nor human, but a phantom of both, and therefore a nothing. So that, whatever St. Paul's reasons for employing this kind of expression, you see at once that, since he uses it alike, whether in reference to the connection of Christ with divinity, or to that with humanity, it can take off nothing from the reality of either the manhood or the Godhead. If it took from one, it must take equally from both. And thus Christ would be left without any subsistence—a conclusion too monstrous for that most credulous of all things—scepticism.

We are certain, therefore—inasmuch as the alternative is an absurdity which waits not for refutation—that when St. Paul asserts of Christ that he was "found in fashion as a man," he intends nothing at variance with the doctrine of the real humanity of the Savior. He points him out as actually man; though, for reasons which remain to be investigated, he adopts the phrase, "the fashion of a man."

Now it cannot, we think, be doubted that an opposition is designed between the expressions "in the form of God," and "found in fashion as a man," and that we shall understand the intent of the latter only through possessing ourselves of that of the former. If you consult your Bibles, you will perceive the representation of St. Paul to be, that it was "the form of God" of which Christ emptied himself, or which Christ laid aside, when condescending to be born of a woman. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be

equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, (so we render it, but literally it is 'emptied himself,') and took upon him the form of a servant." It was, therefore, "the *form of God*" which Christ laid aside. He was still God, and could not, for a lonely instant, cease to be God. But he did not appear as God. He put from him, or he veiled, those effulgent demonstrations of Deity which had commanded the homage, and called forth the admiration of the celestial hierarchy. And though he was, all the while, God, God as truly, and as actually, as when, in the might of manifested Omnipotence, he filled infinite space with glorious masses of architecture, still he so restrained the blazings of Divinity that he could not, in the same sense, be known as God, but wanted the form whilst retaining the essence. He divested himself, then, of the form of God, and assumed, in its stead, the form or fashion of a man. Heretofore, he had both been, and appeared to be God. Now he was God, but appeared as a man. The very being who had dazzled the heavenly hosts in the form of God, walked the earth in the form and fashion of a man. Such, we think, is a fair account of the particular phraseology which St. Paul employs. The apostle is speaking of Christ as more than man. Had Christ been only man, how preposterous to say of him, that he was "found in fashion as a man." What other fashion, what other outward appearance, can a mere man present, but the fashion, the outward appearance of a man? But if Christ were God, and yet appeared as man, there is perfect accuracy in the statement that he was "found in fashion as a man;" and we can understand, readily enough, how he who never ceased, and could not cease to be God, might, at one time, manifest divinity in the form of God, and, at another, shroud that divinity in the form of a servant.

We would pause yet a moment on this point, for it is worth your closest attention. We are told that Christ "emptied himself," so that "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." 2 Cor. 8: 9. But of what did he empty himself? Not of his being, not of his nature, not of his attributes. It must be blasphemous to speak of properties of Godhead as laid aside, or

even suspended. But Christ "emptied himself" of the glories and the majesties to which he had claim, and which, as he sat on the throne of the heavens, he possessed in unmeasured abundance. Whatsoever he was as to nature and essence, whilst appearing amongst the angels in the form of God, that he continued to be still, when, in the form of a servant, he walked the scenes of human habitation. But then the *glories* of the form of God, these for a while he altogether abandoned. If indeed he had appeared upon earth—as, according to the dignity of his nature, he had right to appear—in the majesty and glory of the Highest, it might be hard to understand what riches had been lost by divinity. The scene of display would have been changed. But the splendor of display being unshorn and undiminished, the armies of the sky might have congregated round the Mediator, and have given in their full tale of homage and admiration. But, oh, it was poverty that the Creator should be moving on a province of his own empire, and yet not be recognized nor confessed by his creatures. It was poverty that, when he walked amongst men, scattering blessings as he trode, the anthem of praise floated not around him, and the air was often burdened with the curse and the blasphemy. It was poverty that, as he passed to and fro through tribes whom he had made, and whom he had come down to redeem, scarce a solitary voice called him blessed, scarce a solitary hand was stretched out in friendship, and scarce a solitary roof ever proffered him shelter. And when you contrast this deep and desolate poverty with that exuberant wealth which had been always his own, whilst heaven continued the scene of his manifestations—the wealth of the anthem-peal of ecstasy from a million rich voices, and of the solemn bowing down of sparkling multitudes, and of the glowing homage of immortal hierarchies, whensoever he showed forth his power or his purposes—ye cannot fail to perceive that, in taking upon him flesh, the Eternal Son descended, most literally, from abundance to want; and that, though he continued just as mighty as before, just as infinitely gifted with all the stores and resources of essential divinity, the transition was so total, from

the reaping-in of glory from the whole field of the universe to the receiving, comparatively, nothing of his revenues of honor, that we may assert, without reserve, and without figure, that he who was rich, for our sakes became poor. "In the form of God," he had acted as it were, visibly, amid the enraptured plaudits of angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim. But now, in the form of man, he must be withdrawn from the delighted inspections of the occupants of heaven, and act, as powerfully indeed as before, but mysteriously and invisibly, behind a dark curtain of flesh, and on the dreary platform of a sin-burdened territory. So that the antithesis, "the form of God," and "found in fashion as a man," marks accurately the change to which the Mediator submitted. And thus, whilst on our former showings, there is no impeachment, in the phrase, of the reality of Christ's humanity, we now extract from the description a clear witness to the divinity of Jesus, and show you that a form of speech which seems, at first sight, vague and indefinite, was, if not rendered unavoidable, yet readily dictated, by the union of natures in the person of the Redeemer.

But we will now pass on to consider that act of humility which is ascribed in our text to Christ Jesus. "Being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Now we would have it observed—for some of the greatest truths in theology depend on the fact—that the apostle is here speaking of what Christ did after he had assumed humanity, and not of what he did in assuming humanity. There was an act of humiliation, such as mortal thought cannot compass, in the coming down of Deity, and his tabernacling in flesh. We may well exclaim, wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, when we remember that He whom the universe cannot contain, did, literally, condescend to circumscribe himself within the form of a servant; and that in no figure of speech, but in absolute, though mysterious reality, "the Word was made flesh," St. John, 1 : 14, and the Son of the Highest born of a pure virgin. We shall never find terms in which to embody even our own conceptions of this un-



measured humiliation ; whilst these conceptions themselves leave altogether unapproached the boundary lines of the wonder. Who can "by searching find out God?" Job, 11 : 7. Who, then, by striving can calculate the abasement that God should become man? If I could climb to Deity, I might know what it was for Deity to descend into dust. But forasmuch as God is inaccessible to all my soarings, it can never come within the compass of my imagination to tell up the amount of condescension ; and it will always remain a prodigy, too large for every thing but faith, that the Creator coalesced with the creature, and so constituted a mediator.

But it is not to this act of humiliation that our text bears reference. This was the humiliation in the assumption of humanity. But after humanity had been assumed, when Christ was "found in fashion as a man," he yet further humbled himself ; so that, over and above the humiliation as God, there was an humiliation as man. And it is on this fact that we would fasten your attention. You are to view the Son of God as having brought himself down to the level of humanity, as having laid aside his dignities, and taken part of the flesh and the blood of those whom he yearned to redeem. But then you are not to consider that the humiliation ended here. You are not to suppose that whatsoever came after was wound up, so to speak, in the original humiliation, and thus was nothing more than its fuller development. God humbled himself, and became man. But there was yet a lower depth to which this first humiliation did not necessarily carry him. "Being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled* himself."

The apostle does not leave us to conjecture in what this second humiliation mainly consisted. He represents it as submission to death, "even the death of the cross." So that, after becoming man, it was "humbling himself" to yield to that sentence from which no man is exempted. It was "humbling himself," to die at all ; it was "humbling himself" still more, to die ignominiously.

We will examine successively these statements, and the conclusions to which they naturally lead.

It was humility in Christ to die at all. Who then was this mysterious man

of whom it can be said that he humbled himself in dying? Who can that man be, in whom that was humility which, in others, is necessity? Has there ever been the individual amongst the natural descendants of Adam, however rare his endowments or splendid his achievements, however illustrious by the might of heroism, or endeared by the warmth of philanthropy, of whom we could say that it was humility in him to die? It were as just to say that it was humility in him to have had only five senses, as that it was humility in him to die. The most exalted piety, the nearest approaches to perfection of character, the widest distances between himself and all others of the race ; these, and a hundred the like reasons, would never induce us to give harborage, for an instant, to the thought that a man stood exempt from the lot of humanity, or that it was left, in any sense, to his option whether or no he would die. And, therefore, if there be a strong method of marking off a man from the crowd of the human species, and of distinguishing him from all who bear the same outward appearance, in some mightier respects than those of a mental or moral superiority, is it not the ascribing to him what we may call a lordship over life, or the representing him as so literally at liberty to live, that it shall be humility in him to die? We hold it for an incontrovertible truth, that, had St. Paul said nothing of the pre-existent glory of our Mediator, there would have been enough in the expression of our text to satisfy unprejudiced minds that a mere man, such as one of ourselves, could be no just description of the Lord Christ Jesus. If it were humility in the man to die, there must have been a power in the man of refusing to die. If, in becoming "obedient unto death," the man "humbled himself," there can be no debate that his dying was a voluntary act ; and that, had he chosen to decline submission to the rending asunder of soul and body, he might have continued to this day, unworn by disease, unbroken by age, the immortal man, the indestructible flesh. We can gather nothing from such form of expression, but that it would have been quite possible for the Mediator to have upheld, through long cycles, undecayed his humanity, and to



have preserved it stanch and unbroken, whilst generation after generation rose, and flourished, and fell. He in whom it was humility to die, must have been one who could have resisted, through a succession of ages, the approaches of death, and thus have still trodden our earth, the child of centuries past, the heir of centuries to come.

We plead for it as a most simple and necessary deduction, and we deny altogether that it is a harsh and overstrained inference, from the fact that the man Christ Jesus humbled himself in dying, that the man was more than man, and that a nature, higher than human, yea, even divine, belonged to his person. We can advance no other account of such an act of humility. If you were even to say that the second Adam was, in every respect, just such a man as the first, ere evil entered, and, with it, obnoxiousness to death, you would introduce greater difficulties than the one to be removed. You may say that if, for the sake of winning some advantage to his posterity, Adam, whilst yet unfallen, and therefore, without "the sentence of death," 2 Cor. 1:2, in his members, had consented to die, he would, strictly speaking, have *humbled* himself in dying; and that consequently Christ, supposing him sinless like Adam, and therefore, under no necessity of death, might have displayed humility in consenting to die, and yet not thereby have proved himself divine as well as human. We are not disposed to controvert the statement. So far as we can judge—though we have some jealousy of allowing that a mere creature can *humble* himself in executing God's work—it may be true, that, had the man Christ Jesus been, in every respect, similar to the unfallen Adam, there might have been humility in his dying, and yet no divinity in his person.

But then we strenuously set ourselves against such a false and pernicious view of the Savior's humanity. We will admit that a Papist, but we deny that a Protestant can, without doing utter violence to his creed, maintain that in every respect Christ resembled the unfallen Adam. The Papist entertains extravagant notions of

the virgin-mother of our Lord. He supposes her to have been immaculate, and free from original corruption. The Protestant, on the contrary, withholding not from Mary due honor and esteem, classes her, in every sense, amongst the daughters of man, and believes that, whatever her superior loveliness of character, she had her full share of the pollution of our nature. Now it may consist well enough with the Papist's theory, but it is wholly at variance with the Protestant's, to suppose that the man Jesus, made of the substance of his mother, had a humanity, like that of Adam, free from infirmity as well as from sinful propensity. And we can never bring up the humanity of Christ into exact sameness with the humanity of Adam, without either overthrowing the fundamental article of faith, that the Redeemer was the seed of the woman, or ascribing to his mother such preternatural purity as makes her own birth as mysterious as her son's.

We should pause, for a moment, in our argument, and speak on the point of the Savior's humanity. We are told that Christ's humanity was in every respect the same as our own humanity; fallen, therefore, as ours is fallen. But Christ, as not being one of the natural descendants of Adam, was not included in the covenant made with, and violated by, our common father. Hence his humanity was the solitary exception, the only humanity which became not fallen humanity, as a consequence on apostacy. If a man be a fallen man, he must have fallen in Adam; in other words, he must be one of those whom Adam federally represented. But Christ, as being emphatically the seed of the woman, was not thus federally represented; and therefore Christ fell not, as we fell in Adam. He had not been a party to the broken covenant, and thus could not be a sharer in the guilty consequences of the infraction.

But, nevertheless, while we argue that Christ was not what is termed a fallen man, we contend that, since "made of a woman," Galatians, 4; 4, he was as truly "man, of the substance of his mother,"\* as any one amongst

\* Athanasian Creed.

ourselves, the weakest and most sinful. He was "made of a woman," and not a new creation, like Adam in Paradise. When we say that Christ's humanity was unfallen, we are far enough from saying that his humanity was the same as that of Adam, before Adam transgressed. He took humanity with all those innocent infirmities, but without any of those sinful propensities, which the fall entailed. There are consequences on guilt which are perfectly guiltless. Sin introduced pain, but pain itself is not sin. And therefore Christ, as being "man, of the substance of his mother," derived from her a suffering humanity; but as "conceived by the Holy Ghost,"\* he did not derive a sinful. Fallen humanity denotes a humanity which has descended from a state of moral purity to one of moral impurity. And so long as there has not been this descent, humanity may remain unfallen, and yet pass from physical strength to physical weakness. This is exactly what we hold on the humanity of the Son of God. We do not assert that Christ's humanity was the Adamic humanity; the humanity, that is, of Adam whilst still loyal to Jehovah. Had this humanity been reproduced, there must have been an act of creation; whereas, beyond controversy, Christ was "made of a woman," and not created, like Adam, by an act of omnipotence. And allowing that Christ's humanity was not the Adamic, of course we allow that there were consequences of the fall of which it partook. We divide, therefore, these consequences into innocent infirmities, and sinful propensities. From both was Adam's humanity free before, and with both was it endowed after, transgression. Hence it is enough to have either, and the humanity is broadly distinguished from the Adamic. Now Christ took humanity with the innocent infirmities. He derived humanity from his mother. Bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh, like her he could hunger, and thirst, and weep, and mourn, and writhe, and die. But whilst he took humanity with the innocent infirmities, he did not take it with the sinful propensities. Here Deity inter-

posed. The Holy Ghost overshadowed the Virgin, and, allowing weakness to be derived from her, forbade wickedness; and so caused that there should be generated a sorrowing and a suffering humanity, but nevertheless an undefiled and a spotless; a humanity with tears, but not with stains; accessible to anguish, but not prone to offend; allied most closely with the produced misery, but infinitely removed from the producing cause. So that we hold—and we give it you as what we believe the orthodox doctrine—that Christ's humanity was not the Adamic humanity, that is, the humanity of Adam before the fall; nor fallen humanity, that is, in every respect the humanity of Adam after the fall. It was not the Adamic, because it had the innocent infirmities of the fallen. It was not the fallen, because it had never descended into moral impurity. It was, therefore, most literally our humanity, but without sin. "Made of a woman," Christ derived all from his mother that we derive, except sinfulness. And this he derived not, because Deity, in the person of the Holy Ghost, interposed between the child and the pollution of the parent.

But we now recur to the subject-matter of discussion. We may consider our position untouched, that since a man "made of a woman," humbled himself in dying, he must have had another nature which gave him such power over the human, that he might either yield to, or resist, its infirmities. Christ took our nature with its infirmities. And to die is one of these infirmities, just as it is to hunger, or to thirst, or to be weary. There is no sin in dying. It is, indeed, a consequence on sin. But consequences may be endured without share in the cause; so that Christ could take flesh which had in it a tendency to death, but no tendency to sin. It is not saying that Christ's flesh was sinful like our own, to say that it was corruptible like our own. There might be eradicated all the tendencies to the doing wrong, and still be left all the physical entailments of the wrong done by another. And no man can read the prophecy, "thou wilt not leave my

\* Apostles' Creed.



soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," Psalm 16 : 10, without perceiving that there was no natural incorruptibility, and, therefore, no natural deathlessness in the flesh of Christ Jesus ; for if the flesh had been naturally incorruptible, and, therefore, naturally deathless, how could God be represented as providing that this flesh should not remain so long in the grave as "too see corruption?" The prophecy has no meaning, if it be denied that Christ's body would have corrupted, had it continued in the sepulchre.

We may assert, then, that in Christ's humanity, as in our own, there was a tendency to dissolution ; a tendency resulting from entailed infirmities which were innocent, but in no degree from sinfulness, whether derived or contracted. But as the second person in the Trinity, the Lord of life and glory, Christ Jesus possessed an unlimited control over this tendency, and might, had he pleased, for ever have suspended, or for ever have counteracted it. And herein lay the alleged act of humility. Christ was unquestionably mortal ; otherwise it is most clear that he could not have died at all. But it is to the full as unquestionable that he must have been more than mortal ; otherwise death was unavoidable ; and where can be the humility of submitting to that which we have no power of avoiding ? As mere man, he was mortal. But then as God, the well-spring of life to the population of the universe, he could forever have withstood the advances of death, and have refused it dominion in his own divine person. But "he humbled himself." In order that there might come down upon him the fulness of the wrath-cup, and that he might exhaust the penalties which rolled, like a sea of fire, between earth and heaven, he allowed scope to that liability to death which he might for ever have arrested ; and died, not through any necessity, but through the act of his own will ; died, inasmuch as his humanity was mortal ; died voluntarily, inasmuch as his person was divine.

And this was humility. If, on becoming man, he had ceased to be God, there would have been no humility in his death. He would only have submitted to what he could not have declin-

ed. But since, on becoming what he was not, he ceased not to be what he was, he brought down into the fashion of man all the life-giving energies which appertained to him as God ; and he stood on the earth, the wondrous combination of two natures in one person ; the one nature infirm and tending to decay, the other self-existent, and the source of all being throughout a crowded immensity.

And the one nature might have eternally kept up the other ; and, withstanding the inroads of disease, and pouring in fresh supplies of vitality, have given undecaying vigor to the mortal, perpetual youth to the corruptible. But how then could the Scriptures have been fulfilled ; and where would have been the expiation for the sins of a burdened and groaning creation ? It was an act of humility—the tongue, we have told you, cannot express it, and the thought cannot compass it—that, "for us men and for our salvation," the Eternal Word consented to "be made flesh." God became man. It was stupendous humility. But he was not yet low enough. The *man* must humble himself, humble himself even unto death ; for "without shedding of blood is no remission." Hebrews, 9 : 22. And he did humble himself. Death was avoidable, but he submitted ; the grave might have been overstepped, but he entered.

It would not have been the working out of human redemption, and the millions with whom he had entered into brotherhood would have remained undelivered from their thralldom to Satan, had Deity simply united itself to humanity, and then upheld humanity so as to enable it to defy its great enemy, death. There lay a curse on the earth's population, and he who would be their surety must do more than take their nature—he must carry it through the darkness and the fearfulness of the realized malediction. But what else was this but a fresh act of humility, a new and unlimited stretch of condescension ? Even whilst on earth, and clothed round with human flesh and blood, Christ Jesus was still that great "I am," who sustains "all things by the word of his power," Hebrews, 1 : 3, and out of whose fulness every rank of created intelligence hath, from the beginning,



drawn the elements of existence. And therefore, though "found in fashion as a man," he was all along infinitely superior to the necessity of human nature; and, being able to lay down life and to take it again at pleasure, was only subject to death because determining to die. It was then humility to die. It was the voluntary submission to a curse. It was a free-will descent from the high privilege of bearing on humanity through the falling myriads of successive generations, and of strengthening it to walk as the denizen of eternity, whilst there went forward unresisted, on the right hand and on the left, the mowing-down the species. And when, therefore, you would describe the humiliation of the Son of God, think not that you have opened the depths of abasement, when you have shown him exchanging the throne of light, and the glory which he had with the Father, for a tabernacle of flesh, and companionship with the rebel. He went down a second abyss, we had almost said, as fathomless as the first. From heaven to earth, who shall measure it? But when on earth, when a man, there was the whole precipice of God's curse, not one hair-breadth of which was he necessitated to descend. And when, therefore, he threw himself over this precipice, and sank into the grave, who will deny that there was a new and overwhelming display of condescension; that there was performed by the God-man, even as there had been by the God, an act of self-humiliation to which we can find no parallel; and that, consequently, "being found in fashion as a man, Christ *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto *death*?"

But this is not all. You have not yet completed the survey of the Mediator's humiliation.

It was wonderful self-abasement that he should choose to die. But the manner of the death makes the humility a thousand fold more apparent. "He became obedient unto death, even the *death of the cross*." We wish it observed that Christ Jesus was not insensible to ignominy and disgrace. He submitted; but, oh, he felt acutely and bitterly. You cannot cause a sharper pang to an ingenuous and upright mind than by the imputation of crime. The consciousness of innocence only heightens the

smart. It is the guilty man who cares only for the being condemned—the guiltless is pierced through and through by the being accused. And let it never be thought that the humanity of the Son of God, holy and undefiled as it was, possessed not this sensitiveness to disgrace. "Be ye come out as against a *thief*, with swords and staves?" St. Luke, 22 : 52, was a remonstrance which clearly showed that he felt keenly the shame of unjust and ruffianly treatment. And as if it were not humiliation enough to die, shall he, with all this sensitiveness to disgrace, die the death which was, of all others, ignominious? a death appropriated to the basest condition of the worst men, and unworthy of a free man, whatever the amount of his guiltiness? Shall the separation of soul from body be effected by an execution to which none were doomed but the most wretched of slaves, or the most abandoned of miscreants; by a punishment, too inhuman indeed to find place in the Jewish code, but the nearest approach to which, the hanging up the dead bodies of criminals, was held so infamous and execrable, that the fearful phrase, "accursed by God," was applied to all thus sentenced and used? We speak of nothing but the shame of the cross; for it was the shame which gave display to humility. And we are bold to say, that, after the condescension of God in becoming man, after the condescension of the God-man in consenting to die, there was an act of condescension, scarce inferior to the others, in that the death was "the death of the cross." He who humbled himself in dying at all, humbled himself unspeakably more in dying as a malefactor. It would have been humility had he who was exempt from the necessity of our nature consented to fall, as heroes fall, amid the tears of a grateful people, and the applauses of an admiring world. It would have been humility had he breathed out his soul on the regal couch, and far-spreading tribes had felt themselves orphaned. But to be suspended as a spectacle between heaven and earth; to die a lingering death, exposed to the tauntings and revilings of a profligate multitude, "all they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head;" Psalm 22 : 7; to be "numbered

with the transgressors," Isaiah, 53:12, and expire amid the derision and despite of his own kinsmen after the flesh; if the other were humility, how shall we describe this? Yet to this, even to this, did the Mediator condescend. "He endured," says St. Paul, "the cross, despising the shame." Hebrews, 12:2. He felt the shame; otherwise there was nothing memorable in his bringing himself to despise it. He despised it, not as feeling it no evil, but as making it of no account when set against the glorious results which its endurance would effect. For it was not only necessary that he should die, it was also necessary that he should die ignominiously. He must die as a *criminal*; we wish you to observe that. He was to die as man's substitute; and man was a criminal, yea, the very basest. So that death by public sentence, death as a malefactor, may be said to have been required from a surety who stood in the place of traitors, with all their treason on his shoulders. The shame of the cross was not gratuitous. It was not enough that the substitute humbled himself to death; he must humble himself to a shameful death. And Christ Jesus did this. He could say, in the pathetic words of prophecy, "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Isa. 50:6. And shall we doubt, that, man as he was, keenly alive to unmerited disgrace, the indignities of his death added loathsomeness to the cup which he had undertaken to drink; and shall we not then confess that there was an humiliation in the mode of dying, over and above that of taking flesh, and that of permitting himself to be mortal—so that the apostle's words are vindicated in their every letter, "being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto *death*, even the death of *the cross*?"

We can only, in conclusion, press on you the exhortation of St. Paul: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." He died to make atonement, but he died also to set a pattern. Shall selfishness find patrons amongst you when you have gazed on this example of disinterestedness? Shall pride be harbored after you have seen Deity

humbling himself, and then, as man, abasing himself, till there was no lower point to which he could descend? And all this for *us*; for you, for me; for the vile, for the reprobate, for the lost! And what return do we make? Alas! for the neglect, the contempt, the coldness, the formality, which he who humbled himself, and agonized, and died the death of shame on our behalf, receives at our hands. Which of us is faithfully taking pattern? Which of us, I do not say, has mastered and ejected pride, but is setting himself in good earnest, and with all the energy which might be brought to the work, to the wrestling with pride and sweeping it from the breast? would to God that this passion-season may leave us more humble, more self-denying, more disposed to bear one another's burdens, than it finds us. Would to God that it may write, more deeply than ever on our hearts, the doctrine which is the alone engine against the haughtiness and self-sufficiency of the fallen, that the Mediator between earth and heaven was "perfect God and perfect man."\* There must be Deity in the rock which could bear up a foundered world. May none of you forget this. The young amongst you more especially, keep ye this diligently in mind. I have lived much amid the choicest assemblies of the literary youth of our land, and I know full well how commonly the pride of talent, or the appetite for novelty, or the desire to be singular, or the aversion from what is holy, will cause an unstable mind to yield itself to the specious sophistry, or the licentious effrontery, of sceptical writings. I pray God that none of you be drawn within the eddies of that whirlpool of infidelity, which rends into a thousand shivers the noblest barks, freighted with a rich lading of intellect and learning. Be ye watchful alike against the dogmas of an indolent reasoning, and the syren strains of a voluptuous poetry, and the fiendlike sneers of reprobate men, and the polished cavils of fashionable contempt. Let none of these seduce or scare you from the simplicity of the faith, and breathe blighting on your allegiance, and shrivel you into that

\* Athanasian Creed.



withered and sapless thing, the disciple of a creed which owns not divinity in Christ. If I durst choose between poison-cups, I would take Deism rather than Socinianism. It seems better to reject as forgery, than, having received as truth, to drain of meaning, to use, without reserve, the sponge and the thumb-screw; the one, when passages are too plain for controversy, the other when against us, till unmercifully tortured. May you all see that, unless a Mediator, more than human, had stood in the gap to stay the plague, the penal-

ties of a broken law, unsatisfied through eternity, must have entered like fiery arrows, and scathed and maddened each descendant of Adam. May you all learn to use the doctrine of the atonement as the basis of hope, and the motive to holiness. Thus shall this passion-season be a new starting-point to all of us; to those who have never entered on a heavenward course; to those who have entered, and then loitered; so that none, at last, may occupy the strange and fearful position of men for whom a Savior died, but died in vain.

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## SERMON V.

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### THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION VIEWED IN CONNECTION WITH THAT OF THE SOUL'S IMMORTALITY.

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"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life."—JOHN, xi. 25.

There is perhaps no narrative in the New Testament more deeply interesting than that of the raising of Lazarus. It was nearly the last miracle which Jesus performed while sojourning on earth; and, as though intended for a great seal of his mission, you find the Savior preparing himself, with extraordinary care, for this exhibition of his power. He had indeed on two other occasions raised the dead. The daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son of Nain, had both, at his bidding, been restored to life. But you will remember, that, with regard to the former, Christ had used the expression, "the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth:" Mark, 5: 39: and that, probably, the latter had been only a short time deceased when carried out for burial. Hence, in neither case, was the evidence that death had taken place, and that the party was not

in a trance, so clear and decisive that no room was left for the cavils of the sceptic. And accordingly there is ground of doubt whether the apostles themselves were thoroughly convinced of Christ's power over death; whether, that is, they believed him able to recover life when once totally and truly extinguished. At least, you will observe, that, when told that Lazarus was actually dead, they were filled with sorrow; and that, when Christ said that he would go and awaken him from sleep, they resolved indeed to accompany their Master, but expected rather to be themselves stoned by the Jews, than to see their friend brought back from the sepulchre.

We may suppose, therefore, that it was with the design of furnishing an irresistible demonstration of his power, that, after hearing of the illness of La-



zarus, Jesus tarried two days in the place where the message had found him. He loved Lazarus, and Martha and Mary his sisters. It must then have been the dictate of affection that he should hasten to the distressed family as soon as informed of their affliction. But had he reached Bethany before Lazarus expired, or soon after the catastrophe had occurred, we may readily see that the same objection might have been urged against the miracle of restoration, as in the other instances in which the grave had been deprived of its prey. There would not have been incontrovertible proof of actual death; and neither, therefore, would there have been incontrovertible proof that Jesus was "the prince of life." Acts, 3: 15. But, by so delaying his journey that he arrived not at Bethany until Lazarus had been four days dead, Christ cut off all occasion of cavil, and, rendering it undeniable that the soul had been separated from the body, rendered it equally undeniable, when he had wrought the miracle, that he possessed the power of re-uniting the two.

As Jesus approached Bethany, he was met by Martha, who seems to have entertained some indistinct apprehension that his prevalence with God, if not his own might, rendered possible, even then, the restoration of her brother. "I know that, even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." This drew from Jesus the saying, "thy brother shall rise again." The resurrection of the body was, at this time, an article of the national creed, being confessed by the great mass of the Jews, though denied by the Sadducees. Hence Martha had no difficulty in assenting to what Jesus declared; though she plainly implied that she both wished and hoped something more on behalf of her brother. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection, at the last day." And now it was, that, in order to obtain a precise declaration of faith in his power, Jesus addressed Martha in the words of our text, words of an extraordinary beauty and solemnity, put by the Church into the mouth of the minister, as he meets the sorrowing band who bear a brother, or a sister, to the long home appointed for our race. Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection and the life." Martha had ex-

pressed frankly her belief in a general resurrection; but she seemed not to associate this resurrection with Jesus as a cause and an agent. The Redeemer, therefore, gathers, as it were, the general resurrection into Himself; and, as though asserting that all men shall indeed rise, but only through mysterious union with himself, he declares, not that he will effect the resurrection, summoning by his voice the tenantry from the sepulchres, but that he is Himself that resurrection: "I am the resurrection and the life."

Now it were beside our purpose to follow further the narrative of the raising of Lazarus. We have shown you how the words of our text are introduced, and we shall find that, when detached from the context, they furnish material of thought amply sufficient for a single discourse.

It seems to us, that, in claiming such titles as those which are to come under review, Christ declared himself the cause and the origin of the immortality of our bodies and souls. In announcing himself as "the resurrection," he must be considered as stating that he alone effects the wondrous result of the corruptible putting on incorruption. In announcing himself as "the life," he equally states that he endows the spirit with its happiness, yea, rather with its existence through eternity. If Christ had only termed himself "the resurrection," we might have considered him as referring merely to the body—asserting it to be a consequence on his work of mediation that the dust of ages shall again quicken into life. But when He terms himself also "the life," we cannot but suppose a reference to the immortality of the soul, so that this noble and sublime fact is, in some way, associated with the achievements of redemption.

We are accustomed, indeed, to think that the immortality of the soul is independent on the atonement; so that, although had there been no redemption there would have been no resurrection, the principle within us would have remained unquenched, subsisting for ever, and for ever accessible to pain and penalty. We shall not pause to examine the justice or injustice of the opinion. We shall only remark that the existence of the soul is, undoubtedly, as de-

pendent upon God as that of the body; that no spirit, except Deity himself, can be necessarily, and inherently, immortal; and that, if it should please the Almighty to put an arrest on those momentary outgoings of life which flow from himself, and permeate the universe, he would instantly once more be alone in infinity, and one vast bankruptcy of being overspread all the provinces of creation. There seems no reason, if we may thus speak, in the nature of things, why the soul should not die. Her life is a derived and dependent life; and that which is derived and dependent may, of course, cease to be, at the will of the author and upholder. And it is far beyond us to ascertain what term of being would have been assigned to the soul, had there arisen no champion and surety of the fallen. We throw ourselves into a region of speculation, across which there runs no discernible pathway, when we inquire whether there would have been an annihilation, supposing there had not been a redemption of man. We can only say, that the soul has not, and cannot have, any more than the body, the sources of vitality in herself. We can, therefore, see the possibility, if not prove the certainty, that it is only because "the word was made flesh," John, 1: 14, and struggled for us and died, that the human spirit is unquenchable, and that the principle, which distinguishes us from the brutes, shall retain everlastingly its strength and its majesty.

But without travelling into speculative questions, we wish to take our text as a revelation, or announcement, of the immortality of the soul; and to examine how, by joining the terms, resurrection and life, Christ made up what was wanting in the calculations of natural religion, when turned on determining this grand article of faith.

Now with this as our chief object of discourse, we shall endeavor, in the first place, to show briefly the accuracy with which Christ may be designated "the Resurrection." We shall then, in the second place, attempt to prove, that the resurrection of the body is a great element in the demonstration of "the life," the immortality of the soul.

We begin by reminding you of a fact, not easily overlooked, that the resur-

rection is, in the very strictest sense, a consequence on redemption. Had not Christ undertaken the suretyship of our race, there would never have come a time when the dead shall be raised. If there had been no interposition on behalf of the fallen, whatever had become of the souls of men, their bodies must have remained under the tyranny of death. The original curse was a curse of death on the whole man. And it cannot be argued that the curse of the body's death could allow, so long as unrepealed, the body's resurrection. So that we may lay it down as an undisputed truth, that Christ Jesus achieved man's resurrection. He was, emphatically, the Author of man's resurrection. Without Christ, and apart from that redemption of our nature which he wrought out by obedience and suffering, there would have been no resurrection. It is just because the Eternal Son took our nature into union with his own, and endured therein the curse provoked by disobedience, that a time is yet to arrive when the buried generations shall throw off the dishonors of corruption.

But we are ready to allow that the proving Christ the cause, or the author of the resurrection, is not, in strict truth, the proving him that resurrection itself. There must be some broad sense in which it holds good that the resurrection of Christ was the resurrection of all men; otherwise it would be hard to vindicate the thorough accuracy of our text. And if you call to mind the statement of St. Paul, "since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead," 1 Cor. 15: 21, you will perceive that the resurrection came by Christ, in exactly the same manner as death had come by Adam. Now we know that death came by Adam as the representative of human nature; and we, therefore, infer that the resurrection came by Christ as the representative of human nature. Retaining always his divine personality, the second person of the Trinity took our nature into union with his own; and in all his obedience, and in all his suffering, occupied this nature in the character, and with the properties, of a head. When he obeyed, it was the nature, and not a human person which obeyed. When he suffered, it was the



nature, and not a human person which suffered. So that, when he died, he died as our head; and when he rose, he arose also as our head. And thus—keeping up the alleged parallel between Adam and Christ—as every man dies because concerned in the disobedience of the one, so he rises because included in the ransom of the other. Human nature having been crucified, and buried, and raised in Jesus, all who partake of this nature, partake of it in the state into which it has been brought by a Mediator, a state of rescue from the power of the grave, and not of a continuance in its dark dishonors. The nature had almost literally died in Adam, and this nature did as literally revive in Christ. Christ carried it through all its scenes of trial, and toil, and temptation, up to the closing scene of anguish and death; and then he went down in it to the chambers of its lonely slumbers; and there he brake into shivers the chain which bound it and kept it motionless; and he brought it triumphantly back, the mortal immortalized, the decaying imperishable, and “I am the Resurrection,” was then the proclamation to a wondering universe.

We trench not, in the smallest degree, on the special privileges of the godly, when we assert that there is a link which unites Christ with every individual of the vast family of man, and that, in virtue of this link, the graves of the earth shall, at the last day, be rifled of their tenantry. The assertion is that of St. Paul: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death.” Heb. 2: 14. So that the Redeemer made himself bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and he thus united himself with every dweller upon the globe; and, as a consequence on such union, that which he wrought out for his own flesh, he wrought out for all flesh; making, at one and the same time, and by one and the same act, his own immortal, and that of all immortal. He was then, literally, “the Resurrection.” His resurrection was the resurrection of the nature, and the resurrection of the nature was the resurrection of all men. Oh, it is an amazing contemplation, one to which

even thought must always fail to do justice! The first Adam just laid the blighting hand of disobedience on the root of human nature, and the countless millions of shoots, which were to spring up and cover the earth, were stricken with corruption, and could grow only to wither and decay. The second Adam nurtured the root in righteousness, and watered it with blood. And, lo! a vivifying sap went up into every, the most distant branch; and over this sap death wields no power; for the sap goes down with the branch into the bosom of the earth, and, at God’s appointed time, shall quicken it afresh, and cause it to arise indestructible through eternity. It would be quite inconsistent with the resurrection of the nature—and this it is, you observe, which makes Christ “the Resurrection”—that any individual partaking that nature, should continue forever cased up in the sepulchre. And if there never moved upon this earth beings who gave ear to the tidings of salvation; if the successive generations of mankind, without a lonely exception, laughed to scorn the proffers of mercy and forgiveness; still this desperate and unvarying infidelity would have no effect on the resurrection of the species. The bond of flesh is not to be rent by any of the acts of the most daring rebellion. And in virtue of this union, sure as that the Mediator rose, sure as that he shall return and sit, in awful pomp, on the judgment-seat, so sure is it that the earth shall yet heave at every pore; and that, even had it received in deposit the bodies of none save the unrighteous and the infidel, it would give up the dust with a most faithful accuracy; so that the buried would arise, imperishable in bone and sinew; and the despisers of Christ, being of one flesh with him, must share in the resurrection of that flesh, though, not being of one spirit, they shall have no part in its glorification.

You see, then, that Christ is more than the efficient cause of the resurrection; that he is the resurrection: “I am the Resurrection.” And we cannot quit this portion of our subject without again striving to impress upon you the augustness and sublimity of the ascertained fact. The untold myriads of our lineage rose in the resurrection of the



new Head of our race. Never, oh never, would the sheeted reliques of mankind have walked forth from the vaults and the church-yards; never from the valley and the mountain would there have started the millions who have fallen in the battle-tug; never would the giant-caverns of the unfathomed ocean have yielded up the multitudes who were swept from the earth when its wickedness grew desperate, or whom stranded navies have bequeathed to the guardianship of the deep; never would the dislocated and decomposed body have shaken off its dishonors, and stood out in strength and in symmetry, bone coming again to bone, and sinews binding them, and skin covering them—had not He, who so occupied the nature that he could act for the race, descended, in his prowess and his purity, into the chambers of death, and scattering the seeds of a new existence throughout their far-spreading ranges, abandoned them to gloom and silence till a fixed and on-coming day; appointing that then the seeds should certainly germinate into a rich harvest of undying bodies, and the walls of the chambers, falling flat at the trumpet-blast of judgment, disclose the swarming armies of the buried marching onward to the "great white throne." Rev. 20: 11.

But we shall not dwell longer on the fact that Christ Jesus is "the Resurrection." Our second topic of discourse presents most of difficulty; and we shall, therefore, give it the remainder of our time.

We wish to take our text as an announcement of the immortality of the soul, and to examine how, by joining the terms resurrection and life, Christ supplied what was wanting in the calculations of natural religion. Now we hold no terms with those, who, through an overwrought zeal for the honor of the Gospel, would deprecate the strugglings after knowledge which characterized the days preceding Christianity. There arose, at times, men, gifted above their fellows, who threw themselves boldly into the surrounding darkness, and brought out sparklings of truth which they showed to a wondering, yet doubting, world. Thus the immortality of the soul was certainly held by sundry of the ancient philosophers. And though there might be much error

compounded with truth, and much feebleness in the notions entertained of spiritual subsistence, it was a great triumph on the part of the soul, that she did at all shake off the trammels of flesh, and, soaring upwards, snatch something like proof of her own high destinies.

We believe that amongst those who enjoyed not the advantages of revelation there was no suspicion of a resurrection, but there was, at least, a surmise of life. We say a surmise of life. For if you examine carefully the limit to which unaided discovery might be pushed, you will find cause to think that a shrewd guess, or a brilliant conjecture, is the highest attainment of natural religion. That mere matter can never have consciousness; that mere matter can never feel; that, by no constitution and adjustment of its atoms, can mere matter become capable of acts of understanding and reason; we can have no hesitation in saying that these are self-evident truths, of which no candid mind will ask a demonstration. The mind is its own witness that it is something more than matter. And when men have thus proved themselves in part immaterial, they have made a long advance towards proving themselves immortal. They have ascertained, at least, the existence of a principle, which, not being matter, will not necessarily be affected by the dissolution of matter. And having once determined that there is a portion of man adapted for the soaring away from the ruins of matter, let attention be given to the scrutiny of this portion, and it will be found so capable of noble performances, so fitted for the contemplation of things spiritual and divine, that it shall commend itself to the inquirer as destined to the attainments of a loftier existence. So that we are certain upon the point that man might prove himself in part immaterial, and, therefore, capable of existence, when separate from matter. And we are persuaded yet further, that, having shown himself capable of a future existence, he might also show himself capable of an immortal; there being ample reason on the side of the opinion, that the principle, which could survive at all, might go on surviving for ever.

Now this is a brief outline of the ar-

gument which might be pursued for the soul's immortality. Man might reason up from matter as insensible to himself as sensible. He might conclude, that, since what is wholly material can never think, he himself, as being able to think, must be, in part, immaterial. And the moment he has made out the point of an immaterial principle actuating matter, he may bring to bear a vast assemblage of proofs, derived alike from the aspirings of this principle and the attributes of God, all confirmatory of the notion, that the immaterial shall survive when the material has been worn down and sepulchred.

But we think that when a man had reasoned up to a capacity of immortality, he would have reached the furthest possible point. We think that natural religion could just show him that he might live for ever, but certainly not that he would live for ever. He might have been brought into a persuasion that the principle within him was not necessarily subject to death. But he could not have assured himself that God would not consign this principle to death. It is one thing to prove a principle capable of immortality, and quite another to prove that God will allow it to be immortal. And if man had brought into the account the misdoings of his life; if he had remembered how grievously he had permitted the immaterial to be the slave of the material, giving no homage to the ethereal and magnificent principle, but binding it basely down within the frame-work of flesh; why, we may suppose there would have come upon him the fear, we had almost said the hope, that, by an act of omnipotence, God would terminate the existence of that which might have been everlasting, and, sending a canker-worm into the long-dishonored germ, forbid the soul to shoot upwards a plant of immortality.

So that we again say that a capacity, but not a certainty of immortality, would be, probably, the highest discovery arrived at by natural religion. And just here it was that the Gospel came in, and bringing man tidings from the Father of spirits, informed him of the irrevocable appointment that the soul, like the Deity of which it is the spark, shall go not out and wax not dim. Revealed religion approached as the aux-

iliary to natural, and, confirming all its discoveries of man's capacity of immortality, removed all doubts as to his destinies being everlasting. And thus it were fair to contend, that, up to the coming of Christ, man had done nothing more than carry himself to the border-line of eternity; and that there he stood, a disembodied spirit, full of the amazing consciousness, that, if permitted to spring into the unbounded expanse, he should never be mastered by the immensity of flight; but hampered, all the while, by the suspicion that there might go out against him a decree of the Omnipotent, binding down the wings of the soul, and forbidding this expiation over the for ever and for ever of Godhead. So that the Gospel, though it taught not man that he might be, assuredly did teach him that he should be, immortal. It brought him not the first tidings of an immaterial principle, but, certainly, it first informed him that nothing should interfere with the immaterial becoming the eternal.

Now you will observe that it has been the object of these remarks, to prove that natural religion did much, and at the same time left much undone, in regard to the disclosures of a future state to man. We have striven, therefore, to show you a point up to which discovery might be pushed without aid from revelation, but at which, if not thus assisted, it must come necessarily to a stand. And now, if you would bring these statements into connection with our text, we may again say that natural religion had a surmise of life, but no suspicion of a resurrection; that if Christ had only said "I am the life," he would have left in darkness and perplexity the question of the soul's immortality; but that by combining two titles, by calling himself "the resurrection and the life," he removed the difficulties from that question, and brought to light the immortality. We wish you to be clear on this great point. We shall, therefore, examine how natural religion came to be deficient, and how the statement of our text supplied what was wanting.

Now we see no better method of prosecuting this inquiry, than the putting one's self into the position of a man who has no guidance but that of natu-



ral religion. If there had never shone on me the beams of the Gospel, and if I could only gather my arguments from what I felt within myself, and from what I saw occurring around me, I might advance, step by step, through some such process as the following. I am not wholly a material thing. I can perceive, and reason, and remember. I am conscious to myself of powers which it is impossible that mere matter, however wrought up or moulded, could possess or exercise. There must, then, be within me an immaterial principle, a something which is not matter, a soul, an invisible, mysterious, powerful, pervading thing. And this soul, I feel that it struggles after immortality. I feel that it urges me to the practice of virtue, however painful, and that it warns me against the pursuit of vice, however pleasant. I feel that it acts upon me by motives, derived from the properties of a God, but which lose all their point and power, unless I am hereafter to be judged and dealt with according to my actions. And if natural religion have thus enabled me, at the least, to conjecture that there shall come a judgment, and a state of retribution, what is it which puts an arrest on my searchings, and forbids my going onward to certainty? We reply without hesitation, death. Natural religion cannot overleap the grave. It is just the fact of the body's dissolution, of the taking down of this fleshly tabernacle, of the resolution of bone, and flesh, and sinew into dust—it is just this fact which shakes all my calculations of a judgment, and throws a darkness, not to be penetrated, round "life and immortality." 2 Tim. 1: 10. And why so? Why, after showing that I am immaterial—why, after proving that a part of myself spurns from it decay, and is not necessarily affected by the breaking-up of the body—why should death interfere with my conviction of the certainties of judgment and retribution? We hold the reason to be simple and easily defined. If there shall come a judgment, of course the beings judged must be the very beings who have lived on this earth. If there shall come a retribution, of course the beings rewarded or punished must be the very beings who have been virtuous or vicious in this present existence. There can be nothing clear-

er than that the individuals judged, and the individuals recompensed, must be the very individuals who have here moved and acted, the sons and the daughters of humanity. But how can they be? The soul is not the man. There must be the material, as well as the immaterial, to make up man. The vicious person cannot be the suffering person, and the virtuous person cannot be the exalted person, and neither can be the tried person, unless body and soul stand together at the tribunal, constituting hereafter the very person which they constitute here. And if natural religion know nothing of a resurrection—and it does know nothing, the resurrection being purely an article of revelation—we hold that natural religion must here be thrown out of all her calculations, and that confusion and doubt will be the result of her best searchings after truth.

I see that if there be a judgment hereafter, the individuals judged must be the very individuals who have obeyed here, or disobeyed here. But if the material part be dissolved, and there remain nothing but the immaterial, they are not, and they cannot be, the very same individuals. The soul, we again say, is not the man. And if the soul, by itself, stand in judgment, it is not the man who stands in judgment. And if the man stand not in judgment, there is no putting of the obedient, or the offending being upon trial. So that there is at once an overthrow of the reasoning by which I had sustained the expectation, that the future comes charged with the actings of a mighty jurisdiction. I cannot master the mysteries of the sepulchre. I may have sat down in one of the solitudes of nature; and I may have gazed on a firmament and a landscape which seemed to burn with divinity; and I may have heard the whisperings of a more than human voice, telling me that I am destined for companionship with the bright tenantry of a far lovelier scene; and I may then have pondered on myself: there may have throbb'd within me the pulses of eternity; I may have felt the soarings of the immaterial, and I may have risen thrilling with the thought that I should yet find myself the immortal. But if, when I went forth to mix again with my fellows—the splen-



did thought still crowding every chamber of the spirit—I met the spectacle of the dead borne along to their burial; why, this demonstration of human mortality would be as a thunder-cloud passing over my brilliant contemplations; and I should not know how to believe myself reserved for endless allotments, when I saw one of my own lineage confined and sepulchred. How can this buried man be judged? How can he be put upon trial? His soul may be judged, his soul may be put upon trial. But the soul is not himself. And if it be not himself who is judged, judgment proceeds not according to the rigors of justice, and, therefore, not according to the attributes of Deity.

And thus the grand reason why natural religion cannot fully demonstrate a judgment to come, and a state of retribution, seems to be that it cannot demonstrate, nay rather, that it cannot even suspect, the resurrection of the body. The great difficulty, whilst man is left to discover for himself, is how to bring upon the platform of the future the identical beings who are shattered by death. So that unless you introduce “the resurrection,” you will not make intelligible “the life.” The showing that the body will rise is indispensable to the showing, not indeed that the soul is capable of immortality, but that her immortality can consist, as it must consist, with judgment and retribution. We contend, therefore, that the great clearing-up of the soul’s immortality was Christ’s combining the titles of our text, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Let man be assured that his body shall rise, and there is an end to those difficulties which throng around him when observing that his body must die. Thus it was “the resurrection” which turned a flood of brightness on “the life.” The main thing wanted, in order that men might be assured of immortality, was a grappling with death. It was the showing that there should be no lasting separation between soul and body. It was the exhibiting the sepulchres emptied of their vast population, and giving up the dust remoulded into human shape. And this it was which the Mediator effected, not so much by announcement as by action, not so much by preaching resurrection and life, as by being “the

resurrection and the life.” He went down to the grave in the weakness of humanity, but, at the same time, in the might of Deity. And, designing to pour forth a torrent of lustre on the life, the everlasting life of man, oh, he did not bid the firmament cleave asunder, and the constellations of eternity shine out in their majesties, and dazzle and blind an overawed creation. He rose up, a moral giant, from his grave-clothes; and, proving death vanquished in his own stronghold, left the vacant sepulchre as a centre of light to the dwellers on this planet. He took not the suns and systems which crowd immensity in order to form one brilliant cataract, which, rushing down in its glories, might sweep away darkness from the benighted race of the apostate. But he came forth from the tomb, masterful and victorious; and the place where he had lain became the focus of the rays of the long-hidden truth; and the fragments of his grave-stone were the stars from which flashed the immortality of man.

It was by teaching men that they should rise again, it was by being himself “the resurrection,” that he taught them they should live the life of immortality. This was bringing the missing element into the attempted demonstration; for this was proving that the complete man shall stand to be judged at the judgment-seat of God. And thus it is, we again say, that the combination of titles in our text makes the passage an intelligible revelation of the soul’s immortality. And prophets might have stood upon the earth, proclaiming to the nations that every individual carried within himself a principle imperishable and unconquerable; they might have spoken of a vast and solemn scene of assize; and they might have conjured men by the bliss and the glory, the fire and the shame of never-ending allotments: but doubt and uncertainty must have overcast the future, unless they could have bidden their audience anticipate a time when the whole globe, its mountains, its deserts, its cities, its oceans, shall seem resolved into the elements of human-kind; and millions of eyes look up from a million chasms; and long-severed spirits rush down to the very tenements which encased them in the days of pro-

bation: ay, prophets would have spoken in vain of judgment and immortality, unless they could have told out this marvellous leaping into life of whatsoever hath been man; and never could the cloud and the mist have been rolled away from the boundless hereafter, had there not arisen a being who could declare, and make good the declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Now we have been induced to treat on the inspiring words of our text by the consideration that death has, of late, been unusually busy in our metropolis and its environs, and that, therefore, such a subject of address seemed peculiarly calculated to interest your feelings. We thank thee, and we praise thee, O Lord our Redeemer, that thou hast "abolished death." 2 Timothy, 1: 10. We laud and magnify thy glorious name, that thou hast wrestled with our tyrant in the citadel of his empire; and that, if we believe upon thee, death has, for us, been spoiled of its power, so that, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. 15: 55, may burst from our lips as we expect the dissolution of "our earthly house of this tabernacle." 2 Cor. 5: 1. What is it but sin, unpardoned and wrath-deserving sin, which gives death its fearfulness? It is not the mere separation of soul from body, though we own this to be awful and unnatural, worthy man's abhorrence, as causing him, for a while, to cease to be man. It is not the reduction of this flesh into original elements, earth to earth, fire to fire, water to water, which makes death so terrible, compelling the most stout-hearted to shrink back from his approaches. It is because death is a consequence of sin, and this one consequence involves others a thousand-fold more tremendous—a sea of anger, and waves of fire, and the desperate anguish of a storm-tossed spirit—it is on this account that death is appalling: and they who could contentedly, and even cheerfully, depart from a world which has mocked them, and deceived them, and wearied them, oh, they cannot face a God whom they have disobeyed, and neglected, and scorned.

And if, then, there be the taking away of sin; if iniquity be blotted out as a cloud, and transgression as a thick cloud; is not all its bitterness abstract-

ed from death? And if, yet further, in addition to the pardon of sin, there have been imparted to man a "right to the tree of life," Rev. 22: 14, so that there are reserved for him in heaven the splendors of immortality; is not the terrible wrenched away from death? But is not sin pardoned through the blood-shedding of Jesus; and is not glory secured to us through the intercession of Jesus? And where then is the tongue bold enough to deny, that death is virtually abolished unto those who believe on "the resurrection and the life?" Oh, the smile can rest brightly on a dying man's cheek, and the words of rapture can flow from his lips, and his eye can be on angel forms waiting to take charge of his spirit, and his ear can catch the minstrelsy of cherubim; and what are these but trophies—conquerors of earth, and statesmen, and philosophers, can ye match these trophies?—of "the resurrection and the life?"

We look not, indeed, always for triumph and rapture on the death-beds of the righteous. We hold it to be wrong to expect, necessarily, encouragement for ourselves from good men in the act of dissolution. They require encouragement. Christ, when in his agony, did not strengthen others: he needed an angel to strengthen himself. But if there be not ecstasy, there is that composedness, in departing believers, which shows that "the everlasting arms," Deut. 33: 27, are under them and around them. It is a beautiful thing to see a christian die. The confession, whilst there is strength to articulate, that God is faithful to his promises; the faint pressure of the hand, giving the same testimony when the tongue can no longer do its office; the motion of the lips, inducing you to bend down, so that you catch broken syllables of expressions such as this, "come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" these make the chamber in which the righteous die one of the most privileged scenes upon earth; and he who can be present, and gather no assurance that death is fettered and manacled, even whilst grasping the believer, must be either inaccessible to moral evidence, or insensible to the most heart-touching appeal.

One after another is withdrawn from the church below, and heaven is gathering into its capacious bosom the com-



pany of the justified. We feel our loss, when those whose experience qualified them to teach, and whose life was a sermon to a neighborhood, are removed to the courts of the church above. But we "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope," 1 Thess. 4: 13, as we mark the breaches which death makes on the right hand and on the left. We may, indeed, think that "the righteous is taken away from the evil to come," Isaiah, 57: 1, and that we ourselves are left to struggle through approaching days of fear and perplexity. Be it so. We are not alone. He who is "the resurrection and the life" leads us on to the battle and the grave. It might accord better with our natural feelings, that they who have instructed us by example, and cheered by exhortation, should remain to counsel and to animate, when the tide of war swells highest, and the voice of blasphemy is loudest. We feel that we can but ill spare the matured piety of the veteran Christian, and the glowing devotion of younger disciples. Yet we will say with Asa, when there came against him Zerah the Ethiopian, with an host of an hundred thousand and three hundred chariots, "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude." 2 Chron. 14: 11.

"The resurrection and the life," these are thy magnificent titles, Captain of our salvation! And, therefore, we commit to thee body and soul; for thou hast redeemed both, and thou wilt advance both to the noblest and most splendid of portions. Who quails and shrinks, scared by the despotism of death? Who amongst you fears the dashings of those cold black waters which roll between us and the promised land? Men and brethren, grasp your own privileges. Men and brethren, Christ Jesus has "abolished death:" will ye, by your faithlessness, throw strength into the skeleton, and give back empire to the dethroned and destroyed? Yes, "the resurrection and the life" "abolished death." Ye must indeed die, and so far death remains undestroyed. But if the terrible be destroyed when it can no longer terrify, and if the injurious be destroyed when

it can no longer injure; if the enemy be abolished when it does the work of a friend, and if the tyrant be abolished when performing the offices of a servant; if the repulsive be destroyed when we can welcome it, and if the odious be destroyed when we can embrace it; if the quicksand be abolished when we can walk it and sink not; if the fire be abolished when we can pass through it and be scorched not; if the poison be abolished when we can drink it and be hurt not; then is death destroyed, then is death abolished, to all who believe on "the resurrection and the life;" and the noble prophecy is fulfilled (bear witness, ye groups of the ransomed, bending down from your high citadel of triumph), "O Death, I will be thy plagues; O Grave, I will be thy destruction." Hosea, 13: 14.

"I heard a voice from heaven"—oh, for the angel's tongue that words so beautiful might have all their melodiousness—"saying unto me, write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." Rev. 14: 13. It is yet but a little while, and we shall be delivered from the burden and the conflict, and, with all those who have preceded us in the righteous struggle, enjoy the deep raptures of a Mediator's presence. Then, re-united to the friends with whom we took sweet counsel upon earth, we shall recount our toil only to heighten our ecstasy; and call to mind the tug and the din of war, only that, with a more bounding throb, and a richer song, we may feel and celebrate the wonders of redemption. And when the morning of the first resurrection breaks on this long-disordered and groaning creation, then shall our text be understood in all its majesty, and in all its marvel: and then shall the words, whose syllables mingle so often with the funeral knell that we are disposed to carve them on the cypress-tree rather than on the palm, "I am the resurrection and the life," form the chorus of that noble anthem, which those for whom Christ "died and rose and revived," Rom. 14: 9, shall chant as they march from judgment to glory.

We add nothing more. We show you the privileges of the righteous. We tell you, that if you would die their



death, you must live their life. And, conjuring you, by the memory of those who have gone hence in the faith of the Redeemer, that ye "run with patience the race set before you," Heb. 12: 1, we send you to your homes with the comforting words which succeed our text, "he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die; believest thou this?" God forbid there should be one of you refusing to answer with Martha, "yea, Lord, yea."

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## SERMON VI.

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### THE POWER OF WICKEDNESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS TO REPRODUCE THEMSELVES.

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"For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—GAL. vi. 7.

You may be all aware that what is termed the argument from analogy has been carried out to great length by thinking men, and that much of the strongest witness for christianity has been won on this field of investigation. It is altogether a most curious and profitable inquiry, which sets itself to the tracing out resemblances between natural and spiritual things, and which thus proposes to establish, at the least, a probability that creation and christianity have one and the same author. And we think that we shall not overstep the limits of truth, if we declare that nature wears the appearance of having been actually designed for the illustration of the Bible. We believe that he who, with a devout mind, searches most diligently into the beauties and mysteries of the material world, will find himself met constantly by exhibitions, which seem to him the pages of Scripture written in the stars, and the forests, and the waters, of this creation. There is such a sameness of dealing, characteristic of the natural and the spiritual, that the Bible may be read in the outspread of the landscape, and the operations of agriculture: whilst, conversely, the laws obeyed by this earth and its productions may be traced as pervading the appointments of revelation. It were beside our purpose to go at length into demonstration of this coincidence. But you may all perceive, assuming its existence, that the furnished argument is clear and convincing. If there run the same principle through natural and spiritual things, through the book of nature and the Bible, we vindicate the same authorship to both, and prove, with an almost geometric precision, that the God of creation is also the God of christianity. I look on the natural firmament with its glorious inlay of stars; and it is unto me as the breastplate of the great high-priest, "ardent with gems oracular," from which, as from the urim and thummim on Aaron's ephod, come messages full of divinity. And when I turn to the page of Scripture, and perceive the nicest resemblance between the characters in which this page is written, and those which glitter before me on the crowded concave, I feel that, in trusting myself to the declarations of the Bible, I cling to Him who speaks to me from every point, and by every splendor of the visible universe, whose voice is in the marchings of planets,

and the rushing of whose melodies is in the wings of the day-light.

But, though we go not into the general inquiry, we take one great principle, the principle of a resurrection, and we affirm, in illustration of what has been advanced, that it runs alike through God's natural and spiritual dealings. Just as God hath appointed that man's body, after moldering away, shall come forth quickened and renewed, so has he ordained that the seed, after corrupting in the ground, shall yield a harvest of the like kind with itself. It is, moreover, God's ordinary course to allow an apparent destruction as preparatory, or introductory to, complete success or renovation. He does not permit the springing up, until there has been, on human calculation, a thorough withering away. So that the maxim might be shown to hold universally good, "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." 1 Cor. 15: 36. We may observe yet further, that, as with the husbandman, if he sow the corn, he shall reap the corn, and if he sow the weed, he shall reap the weed; thus with myself as a responsible agent, if I sow the corruptible, I shall reap the corruptible; and if I sow the imperishable, I shall reap the imperishable. The seed reproduces itself. This is the fact in reference to spiritual things, on which we would fasten your attention; "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Now we are all, to a certain extent, familiar with this principle; for it is forced on our notice by every-day occurrences. We observe that a dissolute and reckless youth is ordinarily followed by a premature and miserable old age. We see that honesty and industry win commonly comfort and respect; and that, on the contrary, levity and a want of carefulness produce pauperism and disrepute. And yet further, unless we go over to the ranks of infidelity, we cannot question that a course of disobedience to God is earning man's eternal destruction; whilst, through submission to the revealed will of his Master, there is secured admittance into a glorious heritage. We are thus aware that there runs through the Creator's dealings with our race the principle of an identity, or sameness, between the things which man sows and

those which he reaps. But we think it possible that we may have contented ourselves with too superficial a view of this principle; and that, through not searching into what may be termed its philosophy, we allow much that is important to elude observation. The seed sown in the earth goes on, as it were, by a sort of natural process, and without direct interference from God, to yield seed of the same description with itself. And we wish it well observed, whether there be not in spiritual things an analogy the most perfect to what thus takes place in natural. We think that, upon a careful examination, you will find groundwork of belief that the simile holds good in every possible respect: so that what a man sows, if left to its own vegetating powers, will yield, naturally, a harvest of its own kind and description.

We shall study to establish this point in regard, first, to the present scene of probation; and, secondly, to the future scene of recompense.

We begin with the present scene of probation, and will put you in possession of the exact point to be made out, by referring you to the instance of Pharaoh. We know that whilst God was acting on the Egyptians by the awful apparatus of plague and prodigy, he is often said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that the monarch refused to let Israel go. And it is a great question to decide, whether God actually interfered to strengthen and confirm the obstinacy of Pharaoh, or only left the king to the workings of his own heart, as knowing that one degree of unbelief would generate another and a stancher. It seems to us at variance with all that is revealed of the Creator, to suppose him urging on the wicked in his wickedness, or bringing any engine to bear on the ungodly which shall make them more desperate in rebellion. God willeth not the death of any sinner. And though, after long striving with an individual, after plying him with the various excitements which are best calculated to stir a rational, and agitate an immortal being, he may withdraw all the aids of the Spirit, and so give him over to that worst of all tyrants, himself; yet this, we contend, must be the extreme thing ever done by the Almighty to man, the leaving



him, but not the constraining him, to do evil. And when, therefore, it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and when the expression is repeated, so as to mark a continued and on-going hardening, we have no other idea of the meaning, than that God, moved by the obstinacy of Pharaoh, withdrew from him, gradually, all the restraints of his grace; and that as these restraints were more and more removed, the heart of the king was more and more hardened. We look upon the instance as a precise illustration of the truth, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Pharaoh sowed obstinacy, and Pharaoh reaped obstinacy. The seed was put into the soil; and there was no need, any more than with the grain of corn, that God should interfere with any new power. Nothing more was required than that the seed should be left to vegetate, to act out its own nature. And though God, had he pleased, might have counteracted this nature, yet, when he resolved to give up Pharaoh to his unbelief, he had nothing to do but to let alone this nature. The seed of infidelity, which Pharaoh had sown when he rejected the first miracles, was left to itself, and to its own vegetation. It sent up, accordingly, a harvest of its own kind, a harvest of infidelity, and Pharaoh was not to be persuaded by any of the subsequent miracles. So that, when the monarch went on from one degree of hardness to another, till at length, advancing through the cold ranks of the prostrated first-born, he pursued, across a blackened and devastated territory, the people for whose emancipation there had been the visible making bare of the arm of Omnipotence, he was not an instance—perish the thought—of a man compelled by his Maker to offend and be lost; but simply a witness to the truth of the principle, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Now that which took place in the case of this Egyptian is, we argue, precisely what occurs in regard generally to the impenitent. God destroys no man. Every man who is destroyed must destroy himself. When a man stifles an admonition of conscience, he may fairly be said to sow the stiflings of conscience. And when conscience admonishes him the next time, it will

be more feebly and faintly. There will be a less difficulty in overpowering the admonition. And the feebleness of re-monstrance, and the facility of resistance, will increase on every repetition; not because God interferes to make the man callous, but because the thing sown was stifling of conscience, and therefore the thing reaped is stifling of conscience. The Holy Spirit strives with every man. Conscience is but the voice of Deity heard above the din of human passions. But let conscience be resisted, and the Spirit is grieved. Then, as with Pharaoh, there is an abstraction of that influence by which evil is kept under. And thus there is a less and less counteraction to the vegetating power of the seed, and, therefore, a more and more abundant upspringing of that which was sown. So that, though there must be a direct and mighty interference of Deity for the salvation of a man, there is no such interference for his destruction. God must sow the seed of regeneration, and enable man, according to the phraseology of the verse succeeding our text, to sow "to the Spirit." But man sows for himself the seed of impenitence, and of himself, "he soweth to his flesh." And what he sows, he reaps. If, as he grows older, he grow more confirmed in his wickedness; if warnings come upon him with less and less energy; if the solemnities of the judgment lose more and more their power of alarming him, and the terrors of hell their power of affrighting him; why, the man is nothing else but an exhibition of the thickening of the harvest of which himself sowed the seed; and he puts forth, in this his confirmed and settled impenitence, a demonstration, legible by every careful observer, that there needs no apparatus for the turning a man gradually from the clay to the adamant, over and above the apparatus of his own heart, left to itself, and let alone to harden.

We greatly desire that you should rightly understand what the agency is through which the soul is destroyed. It is not that God hath sent out a decree against a man. It is not that he throws a darkness before his eyes which cannot be penetrated, and a chillness into his blood which cannot be thawed, and a torpor into his limbs which cannot be overcome. Harvest-time bring-



ing an abundant produce of what was sown in the seed-time—this, we contend, is the sum-total of the mystery. God interferes not, as it were, with the processes of nature. He opposes not, or, to speak more correctly, he withdraws gradually his opposition to, the vegetation of the seed. And this is all. There is nothing more needed. You resist a motion of the Spirit. Well then, this facilitates further resistance. He who has resisted once will have less difficulty in resisting the second time, and less than that the third time, and less than that the fourth time. So that there comes a harvest of resistances, and all from the single grain of the first resistance. You indulge yourself once in a known sin. Why you will be more easily overpowered by the second temptation, and again more easily by the third, and again more easily by the fourth. And what is this but a harvest of sinful indulgences, and all from the one grain of the first indulgence? You omit some portion of spiritual exercises, of prayer, or of the study of the word. The omission will grow upon you. You will omit more to-morrow, and more the next day, and still more the next. And thus there will be a harvest of omissions, and all from the solitary grain of the first omission. And if, through the germinating power of that which man sows, he proceed naturally from bad to worse; if resistance produce resistance, and indulgence indulgence, and omission omission; shall it be denied that the sinner, throughout the whole history of his experience, throughout his progress across the waste of worldliness and obduracy and impenitence—passing on, as he does, to successive stages of indifference to God, and fool-hardiness, and recklessness—is nothing else but the mower of the fruits of his own husbandry, and thus witnesses, with a power which outdoes all the power of language, that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap?”

It is in this manner that we go into what we term the philosophy of our text, when applied to the present scene of probation. We take the seed in the soil. We show you that, by a natural process, without the interference of God, and simply through his ceasing to counteract the tendencies, there is pro-

duced a wide crop of the same grain as was sown. And thus—all kinds of opposition to God propagating themselves—he who becomes wrought up into an infidel hardihood, or lulled into a sepulchral apathy, is nothing but the sower living on to be the reaper, the husbandman in the successive stages of an agriculture, wherein the ploughing, and the planting, and the gathering, are all his own achievement and all his own destruction.

Now we have confined ourselves to the supposition that the thing sown is wickedness. But you will see at once, that, with a mere verbal alteration, whatever has been advanced illustrates our text when the thing sown is righteousness. If a man resist temptation, there will be a facility of resisting ever augmenting as he goes on with self-denial. Every new achievement of principle will smooth the way to future achievements of the like kind; and the fruit of each moral victory—for we may consider the victory as a seed that is sown—is to place us on loftier vantage-ground for the triumphs of righteousness in days yet to come. We cannot perform a virtuous act without gaining fresh sinew for the service of virtue; just as we cannot perform a vicious, without riveting faster to ourselves the fetters of vice. And, assuredly, if there be thus such a growing strength in habit that every action makes way for its repetition, we may declare of virtue and righteousness that they reproduce themselves; and is not this the same thing as proving that what we sow, that also do we reap?

We would yet further remark, under this head of discourse, that the principle of reaping what we sow is specially to be traced through all the workings of philanthropy. We are persuaded that, if an eminently charitable man experienced great reverse of circumstances, so that from having been the affluent and the benefactor he became the needy and dependent, he would attract towards himself in his distress, all the sympathies of a neighborhood. And whilst the great man, who had had nothing but his greatness to recommend him, would be unpitied or uncared-for in disaster; and the avaricious man, who had grasped tightly his wealth, would meet only ridicule

when it had escaped from his hold; the philanthropic man, who had used his riches as a steward, would form, in his penury, a sort of focus for the kindness of a thousand hearts; and multitudes would press forward to tender him the succor which he had once given to others; and thus there would be a mighty reaping into his own granaries of that very seed which he had been assiduous in sowing.

We go on to observe that it is the marvellous property of spiritual things, though we can scarcely affirm it of natural, that the effort to teach them to others, gives enlargement to our own sphere of information. We are persuaded that the most experienced Christian cannot sit down with the neglected and grossly ignorant laborer—nay, not with the child in a Sunday or infant-school—and strive to explain and enforce the great truths of the Bible, without finding his own views of the Gospel amplified and cleared through this engagement in the business of tuition. The mere trying to make a point plain to another, will oftentimes make it far plainer than ever to ourselves. In illustrating a doctrine of Scripture, in endeavoring to bring it down to the level of a weak or undisciplined understanding, you will find that doctrine presenting itself to your own minds with a new power and unimagined beauty; and though you may have read the standard writers on theology, and mastered the essays of the most learned divines, yet shall such fresh and vigorous apprehensions of truth be derived often from the effort to press it home on the intellect and conscience of the ignorant, that you shall pronounce the cottage of the untaught peasant your best school-house, and the questions even of a child your most searching catechisings on the majestic and mysterious things of our faith. And as you tell over to the poor cottager the story of the incarnation and crucifixion, and inform him of the nature and effects of Adam's apostacy; or even find yourself required to adduce more elementary truths, pressing on the neglected man the being of a God, and the immortality of the soul; oh, it shall constantly occur that you will feel a keener sense than ever of the preciousness of Christ, or a greater awe at the majes-

ties of Jehovah, or a loftier bounding of spirit at the thought of your own deathlessness: and if you feel tempted to count it strange that in teaching another you teach also yourself, and that you carry away from your intercourse with the mechanic, or the child, such an accession to your own knowledge, or your own love, as shall seem to make you the indebted party, and not the obliging; then you have only to remember—and the remembrance will sweep away surprise—that it is a fixed appointment of the Almighty, that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

In respect, moreover, to alms-giving, we may assert that there is evidently such a present advantage in communicating of our temporal good things, that the giver becomes the receiver, and thus the principle under review finds a fresh illustration. The general comfort and security of society depend so greatly on the well-being of the lower orders, that the rich consult most for themselves when they consult most for the poor. There must be restlessness and anxiety in the palace, whilst misery oppresses the great mass of a population. And every effort to increase the happiness, and heighten the character of the poor, will tell powerfully on the condition of those by whom it is made, seeing that the contentment and good order of the peasantry of a country give value to the revenues of its nobles and merchants. For our own part, we never look on a public hospital or infirmary, we never behold the alms-houses into which old age may be received, and the asylums which have been thrown up on all sides for the widow and the orphan, without feeling that, however generously the rich come forward to the relief of the poor, they advantage themselves whilst providing for the suffering and destitute. These buildings, which are the best diadem of our country, not only bring blessings on the land, by serving, it may be, as electrical conductors which turn from us many flashes of the lightning of wrath; but, being as centres whence succors are sent through distressed portions of our community, they are fostering-places of kindly dispositions towards the wealthier ranks; and may, therefore, be so considered



as structures in which a kingdom's prosperity is nursed, that the fittest inscription over their gateways would be this, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Now before we turn to the second topic of discourse, we would make a close application of some of our foregoing statements. You perceive the likelihood, or rather the certainty, to be, that in all cases, there will be a self-propagating power in evil, so that the wrong done shall be parent to a line of misdoings. We have shown you, for example, that to stifle a conviction is the first step in a pathway which leads directly to stupefaction of conscience. And we desire to fasten on this fact, and so to exhibit it that all may discern their near concernment therewith. We remark that men will flock in crowds to the public preaching of the word, though the master natural passion, whatsoever it be, retain undisputed the lordship of their spirits. And this passion may be avarice, or it may be voluptuousness, or ambition, or envy, or pride. But, however characterized, the dominant lust is brought into the sanctuary, and exposed, so to speak, to the exorcisms of the preacher. And who shall say what a disturbing force the sermon will oftentimes put forth against the master-passion; and how frequently the word of the living God, delivered in earnestness and affection, shall have almost made a breach in the strong-holds of Satan? Ay, we believe that often, when a minister, gathering himself up in the strength of his master, launches the thunderbolts of truth against vice and unrighteousness, there is a vast stirring of heart through the listening assembly; and that as he reasons of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," Acts, 24: 25, though the natural ear catch no sounds of anxiety and alarm, attendant angels, who watch the workings of the Gospel, hear the deep beatings of many souls, and almost start at the bounding throb of aroused and agitated spirits. If Satan ever tremble for his ascendancy, it is when the preacher has riveted the attention of the unconverted individual; and, after describing and denouncing the covetous, or pouring out the torrents of his speech on an exhibition of

the voluptuary, or exposing the madness and misery of the proud, comes down on that individual with the startling announcement, "thou art the man." And the individual goes away from the sanctuary, convinced of the necessity of subduing the master-passion; and he will form, and for a while act upon, the resolution of wrestling against pride, or of mortifying lust, or of renouncing avarice. But he proceeds in his own strength, and, having no consciousness of the inabilities of his nature, seeks not to God's Spirit for assistance. In a little time, therefore, all the impression wears away. He saw only the danger of sin: he went not on to see its vileness. And the mind soon habituates itself, or soon grows indifferent, to the contemplation of danger, and, above all, when perhaps distant. Hence the man will return quickly to his old haunts. And whether it be to money-making that he again gives himself, or to sensuality, or to ambition, he will enter on the pursuit with an eagerness heightened by abstinence; and thus the result shall be practically the same, as though, having sown moral stupor, he were reaping in a harvest tremendously luxuriant. And, oh, if the man, after this renouncement, and restoration, of the master-passion, come again to the sanctuary; and if again the preacher denounce, with a righteous vehemence, every working of ungodliness; and the fire be in his eye, and the thunder on his tongue, as he makes a stand for God, and for truth, against a reckless and semi-infidel generation; alas! the man who has felt convictions and sown their stiflings, will be more inaccessible than ever, and more impervious. He will have been hardened through the vegetating process which has gone on in his soul. A far mightier apparatus than before will be required to make the lightest impression. And when you think that there the man is now sitting, unmoved by the terrors of the word; that he can listen with indifference to the very truths which once agitated him; and that, as a consequence on the reproduction of the seed, there is more of the marble in his composition than before, and more of the ice, and more of the iron, so that the likelihood of salvation is fearfully diminished; ye can need no other warning against tri-



fling with convictions, and thus making light of the appointment, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

But we proposed to examine, in the second place, the application of the principle of our text to the future scene of recompense. There can be no question that the reference of the apostle is, specially, to the retributions of another state of being. The present life is emphatically the seed-time, the next life the harvest-time. And the matter we now have in hand is the ascertaining, whether it be by the natural process of the thing sown yielding the thing reaped, that sinfulness here shall give torment hereafter.

You will observe that, in showing the application of the principle under review to the present scene of probation, we proved that the utmost which God does towards confirming a man in impenitence is the leaving him to himself, the withdrawing from him gradually the remonstrances of his Spirit. The man is literally his own hardener, and, therefore, literally his own destroyer. And we now inquire, whether or no he will be his own punisher? We seem required, if we would maintain rigidly the principle of our text, to suppose that what is reaped in the future shall be identical with what is sown in the present. It cannot be questioned that this is a fair representation. The seed reproduces itself. It is the same grain which the sower scatters, and the reaper collects. We may, therefore, lay it down as the statement of our text, that what is reaped in the next life shall be literally of the same kind with what is sown in this life. But if this be correct, it must follow that a man's sinfulness shall be a man's punishment. And there is no lack of scriptural evidence on the side of the opinion, that the leaving the wicked, throughout eternity, to their mutual recriminations, to the workings and boilings of overwrought passions, to the scorpion-sting of an undying remorse, and all the native and inborn agonies of vice—that this, without the interference of a divinely-sent ministry of vengeance, may make that pandemonium which is sketched to us by all that is terrible and ghastly in imagery; and that tormenting, only through giving up the sinner to be his own tor-

mentor, God may fulfil all the ends of a retributive economy, awarding to wickedness its merited condemnation, and displaying to the universe the dreadfulness of rebellion.

It may be, we say, that there shall be required no direct interferences on the part of God. It may be that the Almighty shall not commission an avenging train to goad and lacerate the lost. The sinner is hardened by being left to himself; and may it not be that the sinner shall be punished by being left to himself? We think assuredly that the passage before us leads straightway to such a conclusion. We may have habituated ourselves to the idea that God shall take, as it were, into his own hands the punishment of the condemned, and that, standing over them as the executioner of the sentence, he will visit body and soul with the inflictions of wrath. But it consists far better with the character of God, that judgment should be viewed as the natural produce of sinfulness, so that, without any divine interference, the sinfulness will generate the judgment. Let sinfulness alone, and it will become punishment. Such is, probably, the true account of this awful matter. The thing reaped is the thing sown. And if the thing sown be sinfulness, and if the thing reaped be punishment, then the punishment, after all, must be the sinfulness; and that fearful apparatus of torture which is spoken of in Scripture, the apparatus of a worm that dieth not, and of a fire that is not quenched; this may be just a man's own guilt, the things sown in this mortal life sprung up and waving in an immortal harvest. We think this a point of great moment. It were comparatively little to say of an individual who sells himself to work evil, and carries it with a high hand and a brazen front against the Lord of the whole earth, that he shuts himself up to a certain and definite destruction. The thrilling truth is, that, in working iniquity, he sows for himself anguish. He gives not way to a new desire, he allows not a fresh victory to lust, without multiplying the amount of final torment. By every excursion of passion, and by every indulgence of an unhal- lowed craving, and by all the misdoings of a hardened or dissolute life, he may be literally said to pour into the grana-

ry of his future destinies the goads and stings which shall madden his spirit. He lays up more food for self-reproach. He widens the field over which thought will pass in bitterness, and mow down remorse. He teaches the worm to be ingenious in excruciating, by tasking his wit that he may be ingenious in sinning—for some men, as the prophet saith, and it is a wonderful expression—"are wise to do evil." Jer. 4: 22. And thus, his iniquities opening, as it were, fresh inlets for the approaches of vengeance, with the growth of wickedness will be the growth of punishment; and at last it will appear that his resistance to convictions, his neglect of opportunities, and his determined enslavement to evil, have literally worked for him "a far more exceeding and eternal weight" of despair.

But even this expresses not clearly and fully what seems taught by our text. We are searching for an identity, or sameness, between what is sown and what is reaped. We, therefore, yet further observe that it may not be needful that a material rack should be prepared for the body, and fiery spirits gnaw upon the soul. It may not be needful that the Creator should appoint distinct and extraneous arrangements for torture. Let what we call the husbandry of wickedness go forward; let the sinner reap what the sinner has sown; and there is a harvest of anguish for ever to be gathered. Who discerns not that punishment may thus be sinfulness, and that, therefore, the principle of our text may hold good, to the very letter, in a scene of retribution? A man "sows to the flesh:" this is the apostle's description of sinfulness. He is "of the flesh to reap corruption:" this is his description of punishment. He "sows to the flesh" by pampering the lusts of the flesh; and he "reaps of the flesh," when these pampered lusts fall on him with fresh cravings, and demand of him fresh gratifications. But suppose this reaping continued in the next life, and is not the man mowing down a harvest of agony? Let all those passions and desires which it has been the man's business upon earth to indulge, hunger and thirst for gratification hereafter, and will ye seek elsewhere for the parched tongue beseeching fruitlessly one drop of water? Let the

envious man keep his envy, and the jealous man his jealousy, and the revengeful man his revengefulness; and each has a worm which shall eat out everlastingly the very core of his soul. Let the miser have still his thoughts upon gold, and the drunkard his upon the wine-cup, and the sensualist his upon voluptuousness; and a fire-sheet is round each which shall never be extinguished. We know not whether it be possible to conjure up a more terrible image of a lost man, than by supposing him everlastingly preyed upon by the master-lust which has here held him in bondage. We think that you have before you the spectacle of a being, hunted, as it were, by a never-wearied fiend, when you imagine that there rages in the licentious and profligate—only wrought into a fury which has no parallel upon earth—that very passion which it was the concern of a life-time to indulge, but which it must now be the employment of an eternity to deny. We are persuaded that you reach the summit of all that is tremendous in conception, when you suppose a man consigned to the tyranny of a lust which cannot be conquered, and which cannot be gratified. It is, literally surrendering him to a worm which dies not, to a fire which is not quenched. And whilst the lust does the part of a ceaseless tormentor, the man, unable longer to indulge it, will writhe in remorse at having endowed it with sovereignty: and thus there will go on (though not in our power to conceive, and, O God, grant it may never be our lot to experience) the cravings of passion with the self-reproachings of the soul; and the torn and tossed creature shall for ever long to gratify lust, and for ever bewail his madness in gratifying it.

Now you must perceive that in thus sketching the possible nature of future retribution, we only show that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We prove that sinfulness may be punishment, so that the things reaped shall be identical with the things sown, according to the word of the prophet Hosea, "they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." Hosea, 8: 7. We reckon that the principle of our text, when rigidly applied, requires us to suppose the retribution of the un-



godly the natural produce of their actions. It shall not, perhaps, be that God will interpose with an apparatus of judgments, any more than he now interposes with an apparatus for hardening, or confirming in impenitence. Indifference, if let alone, will produce obduracy; and obduracy, if let alone, will produce torment. Obduracy is indifference multiplied: and thus it is the harvest from the grain. Torment is obduracy perpetuated and bemoaned: and this again is harvest—the grain re-produced, but with thorns round the ear. Thus, from first to last, “whatsoever a man soweth, that also does he reap.” We should be disposed to plead for the sound divinity, as well as the fine poetry of words which Milton puts into the mouth of Satan, when approaching to the survey of paradise. “Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell.” “Myself am hell!” It is the very idea which we have extracted from our text; the idea of a lost creature being his own tormentor, his own place of torment. There shall be needed no retinue of wrath to heap on the fuel, or tighten the rack, or sharpen the goad. He cannot escape from himself, and himself is hell.

We would add that our text is not the only scriptural passage which intimates that sinfulness shall spring up into punishment, exactly as the seed sown produces the harvest. In the first chapter of the Book of Proverbs, the eternal wisdom marks out in terrible language the doom of the scorners. “I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.” Prov. 1: 26. And then, when he would describe their exact punishment, he says, “they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” Prov. 1: 31. They reap, you see, what they sow: their torments are “their own devices.” We have a similar expression in the Book of Job: “even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same.” Job, 4: 8. Thus again in the Book of Proverbs: “the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.” Prov. 14: 14. We may add that solemn verse in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, which seems to us exactly to the point. It is spoken in the prospect of Christ’s immediate ap-

pearing. “He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Rev. 22: 11. The master-property is here represented as remaining the master-property. The unjust continues for ever the unjust; the filthy for ever the filthy. So that the indulged principle, keeps fast its ascendancy, as though, according to our foregoing supposition, it is to become the tormenting principle. The distinguishing characteristic never departs. When it can no longer be served and gratified by its slave, it wreaks its disappointment tremendously on its victim.

There is thus a precise agreement between our text, as now expounded, and other portions of the Bible which refer to the same topic. We have indeed, as you will observe, dealt chiefly with the sowing and the reaping of the wicked, and but just alluded to those of the righteous. It would not, however, be difficult to prove to you, that, inasmuch as holiness is happiness, godliness shall be reward, even as sinfulness shall be punishment. And it is clear that the apostle designed to include both cases under his statement for he subjoins as its illustration, “he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” We cannot indeed plead, in the second case, for as rigid an application of the principle as in the first. We cannot argue, that is, for what we call the natural process of vegetation. There must be constant interferences on the part of Deity. God himself, rather than man, is the sower. And unless God were continually busy with the seed, it could never germinate, and send up a harvest of glory. We think that this distinction between the cases is intimated by St. Paul. The one man sows “to the flesh;” himself the husbandman, himself the territory. The other sows “to the Spirit,” to the Holy Ghost; and here there is a super-induced soil which differs altogether from the natural. But if there be not, in each case, precisely the same, there is sufficient, rigor of application to bear out the assertion of our text. We remember that it was “a crown of righ-



teousness," 2 Tim. 4: 8, which sparkled before St. Paul; and we may, therefore, believe, that the righteousness which God's grace has nourished in the heart, will grow into recompense, just as the wickedness, in which the transgressor has indulged, will shoot into torment. So that, although it were easy to speak at greater length on the case of true believers, we may lay it down as a demonstrated truth, whether respect be had to the godly or the disobedient of the earth, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

And now, what mean ye to reap on that grand harvest-day, the day of judgment? Every one of you is sowing either to the flesh, or to the Spirit; and every one of you must, hereafter, take the sickle in his hand, and mow down the produce of his husbandry. We will speak no longer on things of terror. We have said enough to alarm the indifferent. And we pray God that the careless amongst you may find these words of the prophet ringing in their ears, when they lie down to rest this night, "the harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Jer. 8: 20. But, ere we conclude, we would address a word to the men of God, and animate them to the toils of tillage by the hopes of reaping. We know that it is with much opposition from indwelling corruption, with many thwartings from Satan and your evil hearts, that ye prosecute the work of breaking up your fallow ground, and sowing to yourselves in righteousness. Ye have to deal with a stubborn soil. The prophet Amos asks, "shall horses run upon the rock, will one plough there with oxen?" Amos, 6: 12. Yet this is pre-

cisely what you have to do. It is the rock, "the heart of stone," which you must bring into cultivation. Yet be ye not dismayed. Above all things, pause not, as though doubtful whether to prosecute a labor which seems to grow as it is performed. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." Luke, 9: 62. Rather comfort yourselves with that beautiful declaration of the Psalmist, "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Psalm 126: 5. Rather call to mind the saying of the apostle, "ye are God's husbandry." 2 Cor. 3: 9. It is God, who, by his Spirit, ploughs the ground, and sows the seed, and imparts the influences of sun and shower. "My Father," said Jesus, "is the husbandman;" John, 15: 1; and can ye not feel assured that He will give the increase? Look ye on to the harvest-time. What, though the winter be dreary and long, and there seem no shooting of the fig-tree to tell you that summer is nigh? Christ shall yet speak to his church in that loveliest of poetry, "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land." Cant. 2: 11, 12. Then shall be the harvest. We cannot tell you the glory of the things which ye shall reap. We cannot show you the wavings of the golden corn. But this we know, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;" Rom. 8: 18; and, therefore brethren, beloved in the Lord, "be ye not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Gal. 6: 9.

## SERMON VII.

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 THE POWER OF RELIGION TO STRENGTHEN THE HUMAN INTELLECT.
 

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“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.”—PSALM cxix. 130.

There is no point of view under which the Bible can be surveyed, and not commend itself to thinking minds as a precious and wonderful book. Travelling down to us across the waste of far-off centuries, it brings the history of times which must otherwise have been given up to conjecture and fable. Instructing us as to the creation of the magnificent universe, and defining the authorship of that rich furniture, as well material as intellectual, with which this universe is stored, it delivers our minds from those vague and unsatisfying theories which reason, unaided in her searchings, proposed with respect to the origin of all things. Opening up, moreover, a sublime and simple system of theology, it emancipates the world from degrading superstitions, which, dishonoring Deity by the representations propounded of his character, turn vice into virtue, and so banish what is praiseworthy from human society.

And thus, if you kept out of sight the more important ends subserved by the disclosures of the Bible, there would be no single gift for which men stood so indebted to the Almighty as for the revelation of himself in the pages of Scripture. The great engine of civilization is still the written word of the Most High. And if you visit a tribe of our race in the lowest depths of barbarism, and desire to bring up the debased creatures, and place them on their just level in the scale of existence, it is not by the enactments of earthly legislation, any more than by the tyrannizings

of earthly might, that you may look to bring speedily round the wished-for result. The effective machinery is christianity, and christianity alone. Propagate the tenets of this religion, as registered in the Bible, and a mighty regeneration will go out over the face of the long-degraded community.

We need hardly appeal, in proof of this assertion, to the records of the effects of missionary enterprise. You are all aware, that, in many instances, a great change has been wrought, by the labors of faithful and self-denying men, on the savage clans amongst which they have settled. We omit, for the present, the incalculable advantages consequent on the introduction of christianity, when another state of being is brought into the account. We consider men simply with respect to their sojourning upon earth; and we contend that the revolution, effected in temporal affairs, should win, even from those who prize not its disclosures in regard to eternal, the warmest admiration for the Bible. There has succeeded to lawlessness and violence the beautiful scenery of good order and peace. The rude beings, wont to wander to and fro, alternately the prey and the scourge of neighboring tribes, have settled down to the quiet occupations of industry; and, gathering themselves into villages, and plying the business of handicraft or agriculture, have presented the aspect of a well-disciplined society in exchange for that of a roving and piratical horde. And when a district which has heretofore,

both morally and physically, been little better than a desert, puts forth in all its outspread the tokens of a vigorous culture; and the Sabbath-bell summons from scattered cottages a smiling population, linked together by friendship, and happy in all the sweetness of domestic charities, why, the infidel must be something less than a man, if, with all his contempt for the Bible as a revelation from God, he refuse to admire and esteem it as a noble engine for uplifting humanity from its deep degradations.

But we wish rather to draw off your thoughts from what the Bible has done for society at large, and to fix them on what it effects for individuals. It follows, of course, that, since society is the aggregate of individuals, what the Bible does for the mass is mainly the sum of what it does separately for the units. An effect upon society presupposes an effect on its component members in their individual capacities; it being impossible that the whole should be changed except by the change of its parts.

Now we are persuaded that there is no book, by the perusal of which the mind is so much strengthened, and so much enlarged, as it is by the perusal of the Bible. We deal not yet with the case of the man who, being under the teachings of God's Spirit, has the truths of revelation opened up to him in their gigantic and overwhelming force. We shall come afterwards to the consideration of the circumstances of the converted; we confine ourselves, for the present, to those of the unconverted. We require nothing but an admission of the truth of the Scripture; so that he who reads its declarations and statements, receives them as he would those of a writer of acknowledged veracity. And what we contend is, that the study of the Bible, even when supposed without influence on the soul, is calculated, far more than any other study, to enlarge the mind and strengthen the intellect. There is nothing so likely to elevate, and endow with new vigor, our faculties, as the bringing them into contact with stupendous truths, and the setting them to grasp and measure those truths. If the human mind grow dwarfish and enfeebled, it is, ordinarily, because left to deal with common-place facts, and never summoned to the effort of taking

the span and altitude of broad and lofty disclosures. The understanding will gradually bring itself down to the dimensions of the matters with which alone it is familiarized, till, having long been habituated to contracting its powers, it shall well-nigh lose the ability of expanding them.

But if it be for the enlargement of the mind, and the strengthening of its faculties, that acquaintance should be made with ponderous and far-spreading truths, it must be clear that knowledge of the Bible outdoes all other knowledge in bringing round such result. We deny not that great effects may be wrought on the peasantry of a land by that wondrous diffusion of general information which is now going forward through the instrumentality of the press. It is not possible that our penny magazines should be carrying to the workshop of the artisan, and the cottage of the laborer, an actual library of varied intelligence, without producing an universal outstretch of mind, whether for good, or whether for evil. But if a population could be made a Bible-reading population, we argue that it would be made a far more thinking, and a far more intelligent population, than it will ever become through the turning its attention on simplified sciences and abbreviated histories. If I desired to enlarge a man's mind, I should like to fasten it on the truth that God never had beginning, and never shall have end. I would set it to the receiving this truth, and to the grappling with it. I know that, in endeavoring to comprehend this truth, the mind will be quickly mastered; and that, in attempting to push on to its boundary-lines, it will fall down, wearied with travel, and see infinity still stretching beyond it. But the effort will have been a grand mental discipline. And he who has looked at this discovery of God, as made to us by the word of inspiration, is likely to have come away from the contemplation with his faculties elevated, and at the same time, humbled; so that a vigor, allied in no degree with arrogance, will have been generated by the study of a Bible truth; and the man, whilst strengthening his mind by a mighty exercise, will have learned the hardest, and the most useful, of all lessons—that intellect is



not omnipotent, and that the greatest wisdom may be, oftentimes, the knowing ourselves ignorant.

We are not, you will observe, referring to the Bible as containing the food of the soul, and as teaching man what he must learn, if he would not perish everlastingly. We are simply arguing, that the bringing men to study the Bible would be the going a vast deal further towards making them strong-minded, and intellectual, than the dispersing amongst them treatises on all the subjects which philosophy embraces. The Bible, whilst the only book for the soul, is the best book for the intellect. The sublimity of the topics of which it treats; the dignified simplicity of its manner of handling them; the nobleness of the mysteries which it develops; the illumination which it throws on points the most interesting to creatures conscious of immortality; all these conspire to bring round a result which we insist upon as actual and necessary, namely, that the man who should study the Bible, and not be benefited by it spiritually, would be benefited by it intellectually. We think that it may be reckoned amongst incredible things, that converse should be held with the first parents of our race; that man should stand on this creation whilst its beauty was unsullied, and then mark the retinue of destruction careering with a dominant step over its surface; that he should be admitted to intercourse with patriarchs and prophets, and move through scenes peopled with the majesties of the Eternal, and behold the Godhead himself coming down into humanity, and working out, in the mysterious coalition, the discomfiture of the powers of darkness—oh, we reckon it, we say, amongst incredible things, that all this should be permitted to a man—as it is permitted to every student of Scripture—and yet that he should not come back from the ennobling associations with a mind a hundred-fold more expanded, and a hundred-fold more elevated, than if he had given his time to the exploits of Cæsar, or poured forth his attention on the results of machinery.

We speak not thus in any disparagement of the present unparalleled efforts to make knowledge accessible to all classes of our community. We are far

enough from underrating such efforts: and we hold, unreservedly, that a vast and a beneficial effect may be wrought amongst the poor through the well-applied agency of vigorous instruction. In the mind of many a peasant, whose every moment is bestowed on wringing from the soil a scanty subsistence, there slumber powers, which, had they been evolved by early discipline, would have elevated their possessor to the first rank of philosophers; and many a mechanic, who goes patiently the round of unvaried toil, is, unconsciously, the owner of faculties, which, nursed and expanded by education, would have enabled him to electrify senates, and to win that pre-eminence which men award to the majesty of genius. There arise occasions, when—peculiar circumstances aiding the development—the pent-up talent struggles loose from the trammels of pauperism; and the peasant and mechanic, through a sudden outbreak of mind, start forward to the places for which their intellect fits them. But ordinarily, the powers remain through life bound-up and torpid: and he, therefore, forms but a contracted estimate of the amount of high mental endowment, who reckons by the proud marbles which cause the aisles of a cathedral to breathe the memory of departed greatness, and never thinks, when walking the village church-yard with its rude memorials of the fathers of the valley, that, possibly, there sleeps beneath his feet one who, if early taught, might have trode with a Newton's step the firmament, or swept with a Milton's hand the harp-strings. We make, then, every admission of the power which there is in cultivation to enlarge and unfold the human understanding. We nothing question that mental capacities are equally distributed amongst different classes of society; and that, if it were not for the adventitious circumstances of birth, entailing the advantages of education, there would be sent out from the lower grades the same proportion as from the higher, of individuals distinguished by all the energies of talent.

And thus believing that efforts to disseminate knowledge may cause a general calling forth of the mental powers of our population, we have no other feeling but that of pleasure in the sur-

vey of these efforts. It is indeed possible—and of this we have our fears—that, by sending a throng of publications to the fireside of the cottager, you may draw him away from the Bible, which has heretofore been specially the poor man's book, and thus inflict upon him, as we think, an intellectual injury, full as well as a moral. But, in the argument now in hand, we only uphold the superiority of scriptural knowledge, as compared with any other, when the alone object proposed is that of developing and improving the thinking powers of mankind. And we reckon that a fine triumph might be won for Christianity, by the taking two illiterate individuals, and subjecting them to two different processes of mental discipline. Let the one be made familiar with what is styled general information; let the other be confined to what we call Bible information. And when, in each case, the process has gone on a fair portion of time, and you come to inquire whose reasoning faculties had been most improved, whose mind had most grown and expanded itself, we are persuaded that the scriptural study would vastly carry it over the miscellaneous; and that the experiment would satisfactorily demonstrate, that no knowledge tells so much on the intellect of mankind as that which is furnished by the records of inspiration.

And if the grounds of this persuasion be demanded, we think them so self-evident as scarcely to require the being formally advanced. We say again, that if you keep out of sight the concern which man has in Scriptural truths, regarding him as born for eternity, there is a grandeur about these truths, and a splendor, and a beauty, which must amaze and fascinate him, if he look not beyond the present era of existence. In all the wide range of sciences, what science is there comparable, in its sublimity and difficulty, to the science of God? In all the annals of humankind, what history is there so curious, and so riveting, as that of the infancy of man, the cradling, so to speak, of the earth's population? Where will you find a lawgiver from whose edicts may be learned a nobler jurisprudence than is exhibited by the statute-book of Moses? Whence will you gather such vivid illustrations of the power of truth

as are furnished by the march of christianity, when apostles stood alone, and a whole world was against them? And if there be no book which treats of a loftier science, and none which contains a more interesting history, and none which more thoroughly discloses the principles of right and the prowess of truth; why then, just so far as mental improvement can be proved dependent on acquaintance with scientific matters, or historical, or legal, or ethical, the Bible, beyond all other books, must be counted the grand engine for achieving that improvement: and we claim for the Holy Scriptures the illustrious distinction, that, containing whatsoever is needful for saving the soul, they present also whatsoever is best calculated for strengthening the intellect.

Now we have not carried on our argument to its utmost limit, though we have, perhaps, advanced enough for the illustration of our text. We might occupy your attention with the language, as we have done with the matter, of holy writ. It were easy to show you that there is no human composition presenting, in anything of the same degree, the majesty of oratory and the loveliness of poetry. So that if the debate were simply on the best means of improving the taste of an individual—others might commend to his attention the classic page, or bring forward the standard works of a nation's literature; but we, for our part, would chain him down to the study of Scripture; and we would tell him, that, if he would learn what is noble verse, he must hearken to Isaiah sweeping the chords to Jerusalem's glory; and if he would know what is powerful eloquence, he must stand by St. Paul pleading in bonds at Agrippa's tribunal.

It suits not our purpose to push further this inquiry. But we think it right to impress on you most earnestly the wonderful fact, that, if all the books in the wide world were assembled together, the Bible would as much take the lead in disciplining the understanding, as in directing the soul. Living, as we do, in days when intellectual and scriptural are set down, practically, as opposite terms, and it seems admitted as an axiom that to civilize and christianize, to make men intelligent and to make men religious,



are things which have no necessary, nor even possible connection, it is well that we sometimes revert to the matter-of-fact: and whilst every stripling is boasting that a great enlargement of mind is coming on a nation, through the pouring into all its dwellings a tide of general information, it is right to uphold the forgotten position, that in caring for man as an immortal being, God cared for him as an intellectual; and that, if the Bible were but read by our artisans and our peasantry, we should be surrounded by a far more enlightened and intelligent population than will appear on this land, when the school-master, with his countless magazines, shall have gone through it in its length and in its breadth.

But up to this point we have made no direct reference to those words of David which we brought forward as the subject of present discourse. Yet all our remarks have tended to their illustration. The Psalmist, addressing himself to his God, declares, "the entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple." Now you will at once perceive, that, when taken in its largest signification, this verse ascribes to the Bible precisely that energy for which we have contended. The assertion is, that the entrance of God's word gives light, and that it gives also understanding to the simple; whilst it has been our endeavor to show that a mind, dark through want of instruction, or weak through its powers being either naturally poor, or long unexercised, would become either illuminated, or strengthened, through acquaintance with the contents of Scripture. We thus vindicate the truth of our text, when religion, properly and strictly so called, is not brought into the account. We prove that the study of the Bible, when it does not terminate in the conversion of the soul, will terminate in the clearing and improvement of the intellect. So that you cannot find the sense wherein it does not hold good, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."

But we now go on to observe that the passage applies with a vastly greater force to the converted than to the unconverted. We will employ the remainder of our time in examining its

truth, when the student of Scripture is supposed also the subject of grace. It would seem as though this case were specially contemplated by the Psalmist, there being something in the phraseology which loses otherwise much of its point. The expression "the entrance of thy words," appears to denote more than the simple perusal. The light breaks out, and the understanding is communicated, not through the mere reading of thy words, but through "the entrance of thy words:" the Bible being effective only as its truths pierce, and go deeper than the surface. And although it must be readily conceded that the mere reading, apart from the entrance of the word, can effect none of those results which we have already ascribed to the Bible, we still think the chief reference must be to an entrance into the soul, which is peculiar, rather than to that into the understanding, which is common. We may also remark that the marginal reading of the passage is "the opening of thy words giveth light." If we adopt this translation, which is, probably, the more accurate of the two, we must conclude that the Psalmist speaks of the word as interpreted by God's Spirit; and not merely as perused by the student. It is not the word, the bare letter, which gives the light, and the understanding, specially intended; but the word, as opened, or applied by the Spirit. Now, in treating the text in this its more limited signification, we have to do, first, with a fact, and secondly, with the reasons of that fact. The fact is, that, on conversion, there is given to man an increased measure of understanding. The reasons of this fact are to be looked for in another fact, namely, that conversion results from the entrance, or opening, of God's words. It will be for our profit that we consider attentively both the fact and the reasons. And, first, as to the fact, that, on becoming a man of godliness, the simple becomes increasingly a man of understanding.

Now it is, we believe, commonly observed, by those who set themselves to examine the effects of religion upon different characters, that a general strengthening of the mind is amongst the usual accompaniments of piety. The instances, indeed, are of no rare



occurrence in which a mental weakness, bordering almost on imbecility, has been succeeded by no inconsiderable soundness and strength of understanding. The case has come within our own knowledge of an individual, who, before conversion, was accounted, to say the least, of very limited capacities; but who, after conversion, displayed such power of comprehending difficult truths, and such facility in stating them to others, that men of stanch and well-informed minds sought intercourse as a privilege. Something of the same kind has frequently been observed in regard to children. The grace of God has fallen, like the warm sun of the east, on their mental faculties; and, ripening them into the richness of the summer, whilst the body had as yet not passed through its spring-time, has caused that grey hairs might be instructed by the tender discipline, and brought a neighborhood round a death-bed to learn wisdom from the lips of a youth. And, without confining ourselves to instances which may be reckoned peculiar and extraordinary, we would assert that, in all cases, a marked change passes over the human mind when the heart is renewed by the influences of God's Spirit. We are not guilty of the absurdity of maintaining that there are supernaturally communicated any of those stores of information which are ordinarily gained by a patient and pains-taking application. A man will not become more of an astronomer than he was before, nor more of a chemist, nor more of a linguist. He will have no greater stock of knowledge than he before possessed of subjects which most occupy the learned of his fellows. And if he would inform himself in such subjects, the man of religion must give himself to the same labor as the man of no religion, and sit down, with the same industry, to the treatise and the grammar. The peasant, who becomes not the philosopher simply because his mental powers have been undisciplined, will not leave the plough for the orrery, because his understanding is expanded by religion. Education might give, whilst religion will not give, the powers the philosophical bent. But there is a wide difference between the strengthening the mind, and the storing it with informa-

tion. We may plead for the former effect without at all supposing the latter: though we shall come afterwards to see that information of the loftiest description is conveyed through the opening of the Bible, and that, consequently, if the impartment of knowledge be an improving thing to the faculties, an improvement, the most marked, must result from conversion. But we confine ourselves, at present, to the statement of a fact. We assert that, in all cases, a man is intellectually, as well as spiritually, advantaged through becoming a man of piety. He will have a clearer and less-biassed judgment. His views will be wider, his estimates more correct. His understanding, having been exercised on truths the most stupendous, will be more competent for the examination of what is difficult or obscure. His reason, having learned that much lies beyond her province, as well as much within, will give herself to inquiries with greater humility and greater caution, and therefore, almost to a moral certainty, with greater success. And though we may thus seem rather to account for the fact than to prove it, let it be remembered that this fact, being an effect, can only be established, either by pointing out causes, or by appealing to experience. The appeal to experience is, perhaps, the correcter mode of the two. And we, therefore, content ourselves with saying, that those who have watched character most narrowly, will bear out the statement, that the opening of God's word is followed, ordinarily, by a surprising opening of man's faculties. If you take the rude and illiterate laborer, you will find that regeneration proves to him a sort of intellectual as well as a moral renovation. There shall generally be no ploughman in the village who is so sound, and shrewd, and clear-headed a man, as the one who is most attentive to the salvation of his soul. And if an individual have heretofore been obtuse and unintelligent, let him be converted, and there shall hereafter be commonly a quickness and animation; so that religion, whose prime business it is to shed light upon the heart, shall appear, at the same time, to have thrown fire into the eye. We do not, indeed, assert that genius and talent are imparted

at the new birth. But that it is amongst the characteristics of godliness, that it elevates man in the scale of intellectual being; that it makes him a more thinking, and a more inquiring, and a more discriminating creature; that it both rectifies and strengthens the mental vision; we are guilty of no exaggeration, if we contend for this as universally true; and this, if not more than this, is asserted in the statement, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."

But we are now, in the second place, to consider certain of the reasons of this fact. What is there in the entrance, or, more strictly, in the opening of God's words, which may fairly account for so singular a result? We begin by reminding you that the entrance, or opening of God's word, denotes the application of scriptural truth to the heart and conscience by that Almighty agent, the Holy Ghost. Hence a saving, influential, belief in the disclosures of revelation is the distinguishing property of the individuals referred to in our text. And in inquiring, therefore, how it comes to pass that understanding is given to the simple, we are to proceed on the supposition, that he is endowed with real faith in those mighty truths which inspired writers were commissioned to make known. Thus the question before us is reduced to this—what connection subsists between believing in the heart the words of God, and having the understanding enlightened and strengthened?

Now our great difficulty is not in finding an answer to this question, but in arranging and condensing our material of reply. We would, first, remind you that the truths which have been commended to the belief are the most sublime and spirit-stirring of all that can engage the attention of mankind. They are the truths of eternity, and their dimensions correspond with their duration. And we feel that there must be an amazing demand upon the mind, when, after long years of confinement to the petty affairs of this perishing state, it is summoned to the survey of those unmeasured wonders which crowd the platform of the future. I take a man whose attention has been engrossed by commerce, and whose thoughts have

been given wholly to the schemings and workings of trade. May we not affirm, that, when the grace of God takes possession of this man's soul, there will occur an extraordinary mental revolution; and that, too, brought round by the magnificence of the subjects with which his spirit has newly grown conversant? In place of oceans which can be fathomed, and weighed, and measured, there is an expanse before him without a shore. In place of carrying on intercourse with none but the beings of his own race, separated from him by a few leagues of distance, he sends his vessels, as it were, to lands tenanted by the creatures of a more glorious intelligence, and they return to him, freighted with a produce costlier, and brighter, than earthly merchandise. In place of acquaintance with no ledger save the one in which he casts up the debtor and creditor of a few fellow-worms, there rises before him the vast volume of doomsday, and his gazings are often on the final balance-sheet of the human population. And we simply demand whether you think it possible, that there should be this overpowering accession to the objects which occupy the mind, and yet that the mind itself should not grow, and enlarge, and strengthen? The mind which deals with both worlds cannot, in the nature of things, be so contracted as that which deals only with one. Can that be a large understanding which is conversant with nothing but the scenery of a finite existence; or, rather, if heretofore the understanding have grasped nothing but the facts of an hour and a league, and these have appeared to crowd it to the full, must there not have taken place a scarcely measurable enlargement, if eternity and infinity be now gathered within its spreadings? Besides, there will be a sounder and more correct judgment upon events and probabilities, when reference is always made to the first cause, than when regard is had only to second causes. There will be a fairer and more honest deliberation, when the passions are under the sway of divine promises and threatenings, than when there is no higher restraint than the ill-defined ones of human honor. So that it would seem altogether to be expected, that, on the mere ac-



count of the might and vastness of the truths, into acquaintance with which the mind is introduced, the mind itself will send forth latent and unsuspected powers, or even shoot up into a new stature which shall put to shame its former dwarfishness. Thus the opening of God's words is accompanied, or followed, by the rousing up of dormant energies. The sphere, which the sand-grain seemed to fill, is required to dilate, and take in immensity. The arm which plucked a leaf, or lifted a pebble, must strive to wrench up the oak, and raise the mountain. And in striving it strengthens. The mind, employed on what is great, becomes itself greater; busied with what is bright, it becomes itself brighter. Let the man, therefore, have been even of weak mental capacity—conversion will give something of nerve and tone to that capacity. Besides, it is a thing worthy your remark, and so obvious as scarcely to be overlooked, that all love, except the love of God, reduces and contracts the soul. If a man be a covetous man, fastening the might of his affections upon money, you will ordinarily find him, in every respect, a narrow-minded being. His intellect, whatever its natural capacities, will embrace little or nothing beyond modes of accumulation, and will grow practically unable to overpass the circles of profit and loss. It is just the same, if a man's love be fixed on reputation. We hold it impossible there should be enlarged views, when those views centre in one's self. There may be lofty and far-spreading schemes; for ambition can look upon a world, and think it too small for its marchings. But so long as those schemes are schemes for the aggrandizement of self, they may take a creation for their sphere, and yet require to be described as pitiful and niggardly. It is no mark of an ample mind that it can be filled with an unit. And many a philanthropist laboring quietly and unobtrusively, for the well-being of a solitary parish, or neighborhood, has thereby proved himself a larger-hearted and a larger-souled creature than an Alexander, boundless in his graspings; and that, too, upon the clear and straight-

forward principle, that a heart which holds only one's-self, is a narrower and more circumscribed thing than another which contains a multitude of our fellows. The truth is, that all objects of love, except God, are smaller than the heart itself. They can only fill the heart, through the heart being contracted and narrowed. The human soul was framed, in its first creation, to that wideness as to be capable of enjoying God, though not of fully comprehending him. And it still retains so much of its glorious original, that "all other things gather it in and straiten it from its natural size."\* Whereas the love of God not only occupies it to the full, but, inasmuch as in its broadest enlargement it is still infinitely too narrow for God, this love, as it were, doth stretch and expand it, enabling it to hold more, and giving it, at the same time, more to hold. Thus, since the converted man loves God, and this new object of love demands amplitude of dwelling, we contend that, as a consequence on conversion, there will be extension of the whole mental apparatus. And if you find the man hereafter, as we are bold to say you will find him, exercising a correcter judgment, and displaying a shrewder sense, than had beforetime seemed in his possession, you have only to advance, in explanation of the phenomenon, that "the entrance of God's word giveth understanding to the simple."

But we may state yet more strongly, and also multiply our reasons, why, on becoming religious, the simple man should become more a man of understanding. Let it just be considered that man, whilst left in his state of natural corruption, is a being, in every respect, disorganized. Under no point of view is he the creature that he was, as fashioned, originally, after the image of his Maker. He can no longer act out any of the great ends of his creation: a total disability of loving and obeying the Almighty having been fastened on him by his forefather's apostacy. And when this degraded and ruined being is subjected to the saving operations of the Spirit of God, he is said to be renewed, or remodelled, after the long-

\* Leighton.



lost resemblance. The conscience becomes disquieted; and this is conviction. The heart and its affections are given back to God; and this is conversion. Now we do not say, that, by this great moral renovation, the injuries which the fall caused to the human intellect are necessarily repaired. Nevertheless, we shall assert that the moral improvement is just calculated to bring about an intellectual. You all know how intimately mind and body are associated. One plays wonderfully on the other, so that disease of body may often be traced to gloom of mind, and conversely, gloom of mind be proved to originate in disease of body. And if there be this close connection between mental and corporeal, shall we suppose there is none between mental and moral? On the contrary it is clear that the association, as before hinted, is of the strictest. What an influence do the passions exercise upon the judgment! How is the voice of reason drowned in the cry of impetuous desires! To what absurdities will the understanding give assent, when the will has resolved to take up their advocacy! How little way can truth make with the intellect, when there is something in its character which opposes the inclination! And what do we infer from these undeniable facts? Simply, that whilst the moral functions are disordered, so likewise must be the mental. Simply, that so long as the heart is depraved and disturbed, the mind, in a certain degree, must itself be out of joint. And if you would give the mind fair play, there must be applied straightway a corrective process to the heart. You cannot tell what a man's understanding is, so long as he continues "dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians, 2: 1. There is a mountain upon it. It is tyrannized over by lusts, and passions, and affections, and appetites. It is compelled to form wrong estimates, and to arrive at wrong conclusions. It is not allowed to receive as truth what the carnal nature has an interest in rejecting as falsehood. And what hope, then, is there that the intellect will show itself what it actually is? It may be gigantic, when it seems only puny; respectable, when it passes for despicable. And thus we

bring you back again to the argument in hand. We prove to you, that a weak mind may be so connected with a wicked heart, that to act on the wickedness would be going far towards acting on the weakness. Oh, fatal downfall of man's first parent—the image could not be shivered in its moral features, and remain untouched in its intellectual. Well has it been said, that possibly "Athens was but the rudiments of Paradise, and an Aristotle only the rubbish of Adam."\* But if there be a moral renovation, there will, from the connection now traced, be also, to a certain extent, an intellectual. And hence since at the entrance of God's words the man is renewed in holiness, we have a right to expect that he will also be renewed in understanding. If additional mental capacity be not given, what he before possessed is allowed to develop itself; and this is practically the same as though there were a fresh gift. If he receive not actually a greater measure of understanding, still, inasmuch as the stern embargo which the heart laid on the intellect is mercifully removed, he is, virtually, under the same circumstances as if a new portion were bestowed. Thus, with all the precision which can fairly be required in the interpretation of such a phrase, we prove that, since man is elevated in the scale of intelligence through being raised from his moral degradation, we are bound to conclude with the Psalmist, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."

We have yet one more reason to advance, explanatory of the connection which we set ourselves to trace. You observe that the entrance, or the opening, of God's words denotes such an application to the soul of the truths of revelation that they become influential on the life and conversation. Now, why should a man who lives by the Bible be, practically, possessed of a stronger and clearer understanding than, apparently, belonged to him ere this rule was adopted? The answer may be found in the facts, that it is a believer's duty, whensoever he lacks wisdom, to ask it of God, and a believer's privilege, never to be sent away empty. In all those

\* Dr. South.

cases which require the exercise of a sound discretion—which present opposite difficulties, rendering decision on a course painfully perplexing—who is likely to display the soundest judgment? the man who acts for himself, or another who seeks, and obtains, direction from above? We plead not for rash and unfounded expectations of a divine interference on our behalf. We simply hold fast to the promises of Scripture. And we pronounce it to be beyond all peradventure, that, if the Bible be true, it is also true that they who have been translated from darkness to light are never left without the aids of God's Spirit, unless they seek not those aids, or seek them not earnestly and faithfully. If I have known the entrance, or the opening of the word of our God, then I have practically learned such lessons as these: "lean not to thine own understanding;" "in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths." Prov. 3 : 5, 6. And if I am not to lean to mine own understanding, and if I have the privilege of being directed by a higher than mine own, it is evident that I occupy, practically, the position of one to whom has been given an increased measure of understanding; and what, consequently, is to prevent the simple man, whose rule of life is God's word, from acting in all circumstances, whether ordinary or extraordinary, with such prudence, and discretion, and judgment, that he shall make good, to the very letter, the assertion, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple?"

Now it is not possible to gather into a single discourse the varied reasons which might be given for the fact under review. But the causes already adduced will serve to show, that the fact is, at least, by no means unaccountable: but that, on the contrary, the connection is so necessary between spiritual improvement and intellectual, that amongst the accompaniments of a renewed heart, we may justly reckon a clearer head.

We desire, in conclusion, to press upon you once more the worth of the Bible, and then to wind up our subject with a word of exhortation.

Of all the boons which God has bestowed on this apostate and orphaned

creation, we are bound to say that the Bible is the noblest and most precious. We bring not into comparison with this illustrious donation the glorious sunlight, nor the rich sustenance which is poured forth from the store-houses of the earth, nor that existence itself which allows us, though dust, to soar into companionship with angels. The Bible is the development of man's immortality, the guide which informs how he may move off triumphantly from a contracted and temporary scene, and grasp destinies of unbounded splendor, eternity his life-time and infinity his home. It is the record which tells us that this rebellious section of God's unlimited empire is not excluded from our Maker's compassions; but that the creatures who move upon its surface, though they have basely sepulchred in sinfulness and corruption the magnificence of their nature, are yet so dear in their ruin to Him who first formed them, that he hath bowed down the heavens in order to open their graves. Oh, you have only to think what a change would pass on the aspect of our race, if the Bible were suddenly withdrawn, and all remembrance of it swept away, and you arrive at some faint notion of the worth of the volume. Take from Christendom the Bible, and you have taken the moral chart by which alone its population can be guided. Ignorant of the nature of God, and only guessing at their own immortality, the tens of thousands would be as mariners, tossed on a wide ocean, without a pole-star, and without a compass. It were to mantle the earth with a more than Egyptian darkness: it were to dry up the fountains of human happiness: it were to take the tides from our waters, and leave them stagnant, and the stars from our heavens, and leave them in sackcloth, and the verdure from our valleys, and leave them in barrenness: it were to make the present all recklessness and the future all hopelessness—the maniac's revelry and then the fiend's imprisonment—if you could annihilate that precious volume which tells us of God and of Christ, and unveils immortality, and instructs in duty, and woos to glory. Such is the Bible. Prize ye it, and study it more and more. Prize it, as ye are immortal beings—for it guides to the New Jerusalem. Prize it, as ye are



intellectual beings—for it “giveth understanding to the simple.”

We have now only space for a brief word of exhortation, and we ask for it your closest attention. A minister, if he would be faithful to his calling, must mark the signs of the times, and endeavor so to shape his addresses that they may meet, and expose, the prominent errors. Now we think that, in our own day, there is a strong disposition to put aside the Bible, and to seek out other agency for accomplishing results which God hath appointed it to effect. We fear, for example, that the intellectual benefits of Scriptural knowledge are well-nigh entirely overlooked; and that, in the efforts to raise the standard of mind, there is little or no recognition of the mighty principle, that the Bible outweighs ten thousand Encyclopædias. And we are fearful on your account, lest something of this national substitution of human literature for divine should gain footing in your households. We fear lest, in the business of education, you should separate broadly that teaching which has to do with the salvation of the soul, from that which has to do with the improvement of the mind. We refer to this point, because we think ourselves bound, by the vows of our calling, to take every opportunity of stating the duties which devolve on you as parents or guardians. There is a sense in which it may be affirmed that souls, those mysterious and imperishable things, are given into the custody of every father of a family. And we are persuaded that if there be one thing on this earth, which draws, more than another, the sorrowing regards of the world of spirits, it must be the system of education pursued by the generality of parents. The entering a room gracefully is a vast deal more attended to than the entering into heaven; and you would conclude that the grand thing for which God had sent the child into the world, was that it might catch the Italian accent, and be quite at home in every note of the gamut. Christianity, indeed, is not at variance with the elegancies of life: she can use them as her handmaids, and give them a beauty of which, out of her service, they are utterly destitute. We wage no war, therefore, with accomplishments, any more than with the solid acquirements of a

liberal education. We are only anxious to press on you the necessity that ye make religion the basis of your system. We admit, in all its breadth, the truth of the saying, that knowledge is power. It is power—ay, a fatal and a perilous. Neither the might of armies, nor the scheming of politicians, avails any thing against this power. The school-master, as we have already hinted, is the grand engine for revolutionizing a world. Let knowledge be generally diffused, and the fear of God be kept in the background, and you have done the same for a country as if you had laid the gunpowder under its every institution: there needs only the igniting of a match, and the land shall be strewed with the fragments of all that is glorious and venerable. But, nevertheless, we would not have knowledge chained up in the college and monastery, because its arm is endowed with such sinew and nerve. We would not put forth a finger to uphold a system which we believed based on the ignorance of a population. We only desire to see knowledge of God advance as the vanguard of the host of information. We are sure that an intellectual must be a mighty peasantry. But we are equally sure that an intellectual, and a godless, will demonstrate their might, by the ease with which they crush whatever most adorns and elevates a kingdom. And in speaking to you individually of your duties as parents, we would bring into the family circle the principles thus announced as applicable to the national. We want not to set bounds to the amount of knowledge which you strive to impart. But never let this remembrance be swept from your minds—that, to give a child knowledge without endeavoring, at the same time, to add to knowledge godliness, is to do your best to throw the momentum of the giant into the arm of the idiot: to construct a machinery which may help to move a world, and to leave out the spring which would insure its moving it only towards God. We would have you shun, even as you would the tampering with an immortality deposited in your keeping, the imitating what goes on in a thousand of the households of a professedly Christian neighborhood—the children can pronounce well, and they can step well,



and they can play well; the mother proudly exhibits the specimens of proficiency in painting, and the father dwells, with an air of delight, on the progress made in Virgil and Homer—but if you inquire how far these parents are providing for their own in the things of eternity, why, the children have perhaps learned the Church Catechism, and they read a chapter occasionally on a Sunday afternoon. And that ye may avoid the mistake into which, as we think, the temper of the times is but too likely to lead you, we would have you learn, from the subject which has now been discussed, that, in educating your children for the next life, you best educate them for the present. We give it you, as a truth, made known to us by God, and, at the same time demonstrable by reason, that, in going through the courses of Bible-instruction, there is better mental discipline, whether for a child or an adult, than in any of the cleverly devised methods for opening and strengthening the faculties. We say not that the study of Scripture should exclude other studies, or be substituted for them. Natural philosophy is not to be learned from Scripture nor general history; and we would not have such matters neglected. But we say that Scriptural study should be, at once, the ground-work and companion of every other; and that the mind will advance, with the firmest and most dominant step, into the various departments of knowledge, when familiarized with the truths of revelation, and accustomed to walk their unlimited spreadings. If parents had no higher ambition than to make their children intellectual, they would act most shrewd-

ly by acting as though desirous to make them religious. It is thus we apply our subject to those amongst you who are parents or guardians. But it applies to all. We call upon you all to observe, that, in place of being beneath the notice of the intellectual, the Bible is the great nourisher of intellect. We require of you to bear away to your homes as an undeniable fact, that to care for the soul is to cultivate the mind. We will not yield the culture of the understanding to earthly husbandmen. There are heavenly ministers who water it with a choicer dew, and pour on it the beams of a more brilliant sun, and prune its branches with a kinder and more skilful hand. We will not give up reason to stand always as a priestess at the altars of human philosophy. She hath a more majestic temple to tread, and more beauteous robes wherein to walk, and incense rarer and more fragrant to burn in golden censers. She does well when exploring boldly God's visible works. She does better, when she meekly submits to spiritual teaching, and sits, as a child, at the Savior's feet: for then shall she experience the truth, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light and understanding." And, therefore, be ye heedful—the young amongst you more especially—that ye be not ashamed of piety, as though it argued a feeble capacity. Rather be assured, forasmuch as revelation is the great strengthener of reason, that the march of mind which leaves the Bible in the rear is an advance, like that of our first parents in Paradise, towards knowledge, but, at the same time, towards death.

## SERMON VIII.

## THE PROVISION MADE BY GOD FOR THE POOR.

“Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.”—PSALM, lxxviii. 10.

We think it one of the most remarkable sayings of holy writ, that “the poor shall never cease out of the land.” Deut. 15: 11. The words may be regarded as a prophecy, and their fulfilment has been every way most surprising. Amid all the revolutions whereof our earth has been the scene—revolutions which have presented to us empire after empire rising to the summit of greatness, and gathering into its provinces the wealth of the world—there has never been a nation over which riches have been equally diffused. The many have had poverty for their portion, whilst abundance has been poured into the laps of the few. And if you refuse to consider this as a divine appointment, it will be hard, we think, to account for the phenomenon. It might have been expected that the distribution of physical comfort would be proportioned to the amount of physical strength; so that numbers would dictate to individuals; and the power of bone and muscle be brought to bear on the production of equality of circumstance. And just in the degree that we recognize the fulfilment of prophecy in the continuance of poverty, we must be prepared to allow, that the unequal distribution of temporal advantages is a result of the Almighty's good pleasure; and that, consequently, all popular harangues on equality of rights are nothing less than contradictions to the assertions, “the rich and poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all.” Proverbs, 22: 2.

There is no easier subject for stormy and factious declamation, than the hard and unnatural estate of poverty. The

slightest reference to it engages, at once, the feelings of a multitude. And whensoever a bold and talented demagogue works up into his speeches the doctrine, that all men are born with equal rights, he plies his audience with the strongest excitement, but does, at the same time, great despite to the word of inspiration. We hold it to be clear to every student of Scripture, that God hath ordained successive ranks in human society, and that uniformity of earthly allotment was never contemplated by his providence. And, therefore, do we likewise hold, that attempts at equalization would be tantamount to rebellion against the appointments of heaven; and that infidelity must upheave the altars of a land, ere its inhabitants could venture out on such enterprise. It is just that enterprise which may be looked for as the offspring of a doctrine demonstrable only when the Bible shall have perished—the doctrine, that all power emanates from the people. When a population have been nursed into the belief that sovereignty is theirs, the likelihood is that the first assertion of this sovereignty will be the seizing the possessions of those who gave them the lesson. The readiest way of overturning the rights of property is to introduce false theories on the origin of power. And they must, at the least, be shortsighted calculators, who, having taught our mechanics and laborers that they are the true king of the land, expect them to continue well contented with the title, and quite willing that superiors should keep the advantages.

But our main concern lies, at pro-

sent, with the fact, that poverty is an appointment of God. We assume this fact as one not to be questioned by a christian congregation. And when we have fastened on the truth that God hath appointed poverty, we must set ourselves to ascertain that God hath not overlooked the poor; there being nothing upon which we may have a greater prior certainty than on this, namely, that if it be God's will that the poor should not cease, it must also be his arrangement that the poor should be cared for.

Now our text is a concise, but striking, declaration that the solitudes of God are engaged on the side of the poor. It would seem, indeed, from the context, that spiritual blessings were specially intended by the Psalmist, when addressing himself to God in the words to be examined. He speaks of the Almighty as sending a plentiful rain, and refreshing the weary inheritance. And we think it required by the nature of this imagery, as compared with the rest of scriptural metaphor, that we understand an outpouring of the Spirit as the mercy which David commemorates. But still there is nothing, either in the words themselves, or in those which accompany them, requiring that we circumscribe the bearings of the passage. We may take it as a general truth, that "thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor." And we shall, therefore, endeavor to turn your thoughts on two separate inquiries; examining, in the first place, how the assertion holds good in temporal things, and in the second place, how it holds good in spiritual things. This second inquiry is the more closely connected with the business of our Sabbath assemblings, and we shall give it, therefore, the main of our time and attention.

Now if we set ourselves to establish as a matter-of-fact, that, in temporal things, God, of his goodness, has prepared for the poor, we seem, at once, arrested in our demonstration by that undeniable wretchedness which lies heavy on the mass of a crowded population. But it would be altogether wrong that we should judge any appointment of God, without reference being had to the distortions which man has himself introduced. We feel

assured upon the point, that, in constructing the framework of society, God designed that one class should depend greatly on another, and that some should have nothing but a hard-earned pittance, whilst others were charioted in plenty. But we are to the full as clear upon another point, namely, that if in any case there be positive destitution, it is not to be referred to the established ordinance of God, but only to some forgetfulness, or violation, of that mutual dependence which this ordinance would encourage. There has never yet been the state of things—and, in spite of the fears of political economists, we know not that there ever will be—in which the produce of this earth sufficed not for its population. God has given the globe for the dwelling-place of man, and, causing that its valleys stand thick with corn, scatters food over its surface to satisfy the wants of an enormous and multiplying tenantry. And unless you can show that he hath sent such excess of inhabitants into this district of his empire, that there cannot be wrung for them sufficiency of sustenance from the overtasked soil, you will have made no advances towards a demonstration, that the veriest outcast, worn to a mere skeleton by famine, disproves the assertion, that God, of his goodness, has prepared for the poor. The question is not whether every poor man obtains enough: for this brings into the account human management. It is simply, whether God has given enough: for this limits our thoughts to divine appointment. And beyond all doubt, when we take this plain and straightforward view of the subject, we cannot put from us the conclusion that God, of his goodness, has prepared for the poor. If he had so limited the productiveness of the earth that it would yield only enough for a fraction of its inhabitants; and if he had allowed that the storehouses of nature might be exhausted by the demands of the myriads whom he summoned into life; there would lie objections against a statement which ascribes to his goodness the having made an universal provision. But if—and we have here a point admitting not of controversy—he has always hitherto caused that the productions of the globe should keep pace with its popu-



lation, it is nothing better than the reasoning of a child, that God hath not provided for the poor, because through mal-administration of his bounties, the poor may, in certain cases, have been wholly unprovided for.

And it is worth your while to observe, that God prepared more than mere sustenance for the poor, when he endowed the soil with its surprising, and still undeveloped productiveness. We are indebted to the ground on which we tread for the arts which adorn, and the learning which ennobles, as well as for the food which sustains human life. If God had thrown such barrenness into the earth that it would yield only enough to support those who tilled it, you may all perceive that every man must have labored at agriculture for himself; there being no overplus of produce which the toil of one individual could have procured for another. Thus, if you examine with any carefulness, you must necessarily discover, that the sole reason why this company of men can devote themselves to the business of legislation, and that to the study of jurisprudence; why we may erect schools, and universities, and so set apart individuals who shall employ themselves on the instruction of their fellows; why we can have armies to defend the poor man's cottage and the rich man's palace, and navies to prosecute commerce, and preachers to stand up in our cities and villages, pointing mankind to Jesus of Nazareth—that the alone practical reason of all this must be sought in the fertility of the soil: for if the soil were not fertile enough to yield more than the tiller requires for himself, every man must be a husbandman, and none could follow any other avocations. So that, by an arrangement which appears the more wonderful the more it is pondered, God hath literally wrought into the soil of this globe a provision for the varied wants, physical and moral, and intellectual, of the race whose generations possess successively, its provinces. That which made wealth possible was equally a preparation for the well-being of poverty. And though you may trace, with a curious accuracy, the rise and progress of sciences; and map down the steps of the march of civilization; and show how, in the advancements of a nation, the talented and

enterprising have carried on crusades against ignorance and barbarism; we can still bring you back to the dust out of which we were made, and bid you find in its particles the elements of the results on which your admiration is poured, and tie you down, with the rigor of a mathematical demonstration, to the marvellous, though half-forgotten, fact, that God invested the ground with the power of ministering to man's many necessities—so that the arts by which the comforts of a population are multiplied, and the laws by which their rights are upheld, and the schools in which their minds are disciplined, and the churches in which their souls are instructed—all these may be referred to one and the same grand ordinance; all ascribed to that fruitfulness of the earth by which God, “of his goodness, has prepared for the poor.”

But we said that we should dwell at no great length on the first division of our subject; and we now, therefore, pass on to investigate the second. We are to show how the assertion holds good in spiritual things, that God, of his goodness, has prepared for the poor.

Now we often set before you the noble doctrine of Scripture and our Church, that Christ died for the whole world; and that, consequently, the human being can never be born whose sins were not laid on the surety of the apostate. It is a deep and mysterious, but glorious, truth, that the sins of every man were punished in Jesus, so that the guiltiness of each individual pressed in upon the Mediator, and wrung out its penalties from his flesh and his spirit. The person of Christ Jesus was divine; whilst in that person were united two natures, the human and divine. And on this account it was that the sins of every man could rush against the surety, and take their penalty out of his anguish. It is not merely that Christ was the brother of every man. A man and his brother are walled-off, and separated, by their personality. What is done by the one cannot be felt, as his own action, by the other. But Christ, by assuming our nature, took, as it were, a part of every man. He was not, as any of us is, a mere human individual. But having human nature, and not human personality, he was tied, so to speak, by a most sen-

sitive fibre, to each member of the enormous family of man. And along these unnumbered threads of sympathy there came travelling the evil deeds, and the evil thoughts, and the evil words, of every child of a rebellious seed; and they knocked at his heart, and asked for vengeance: and thus the sin became his own in every thing but its guiltiness; and the wondrous result was brought round, that he "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," 1 Peter, 2: 22, felt every sin which can ever be committed, and was pierced by it, and torn by it: and the alone innocent one—the solitary undefiled and unprofaned man—he was so bound up with each rebel against God that the rebellion, in all its ramifications, seemed to throw itself into his heart; and, convulsing where it could not contaminate, dislocated the soul which it did not defile, and caused the thorough endurance of all the wretchedness, and all the anguish, which were due to the transgressions of a mighty population. Ay, and it is because I can clearly perceive, that, in taking human nature, Christ fastened me to himself by one of those sympathetic threads which can never be snapped, that I feel certified that every sin which I have committed, and every sin which I shall yet commit, went in upon the Mediator and swelled his sufferings. When he died, my sins, indeed, had not been perpetrated. Yet, forasmuch as they were to be perpetrated in the nature which he had taken to himself, they came crowding up from the unborn ages: and they ran, like molten lead, along the fibre which, even then, bound me to the Savior; and pouring themselves into the sanctuary of his righteous soul, contributed to the wringing from him the mysterious cry, "mine iniquities"—mine, done in that nature, which is emphatically mine—"mine iniquities have taken hold upon me so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." Psalm, 40: 12.

Now it was thus with a distinct and specific reference to every individual, the poorest and the meanest of our race, that "the word was made flesh," John, 1: 14, and dwelt and died upon this earth. It was not merely that God cared for the world in the mass, as for

a province of his empire tenanted by the wayward and the wretched. He cared for each single descendant of Adam. We know, with an assurance which it is beyond the power of argument to shake, that Christ Jesus tasted death for every man. We are commissioned to say to each individual—it matters not who he be, scorched by an eastern sun, or girt in by polar snows—the Son of the Eternal died for thee, for thee separately, for thee individually. And if, then, you cannot find us the outcast unredeemed by the costly processes of the incarnation and crucifixion; if, addressing ourselves to the least known, and the most insignificant of our species, we can tell him that, though he be but a unit, yea almost a cipher in the vast sum of human existence, he has so engaged the solitudes of the Almighty that a divine person undertook his suretyship, and threw down the barriers which sin had cast up between him and happiness—oh, have we not an overpowering proof, that God has been mindful of the despised ones and the destitute; and whilst we can appeal to such provision on behalf of the poor as places heaven within their reach, in all its magnificence, and in all its blessedness, where is the tongue that can presume to deny that God hath, "of his godness, prepared for the poor?"

But we cannot content ourselves with this general proof. It seems implied in our text—that this is the point which we seek to establish—that, in spiritual things, God has prepared for the poor even more than for the rich. We proceed, then, to observe that God has so manifested a tender and impartial concern for his creatures, as to have thrown advantages round poverty which may well be said to counterbalance its disadvantages. It is unquestionable that the condition of a poor man is more favorable than that of a rich to the reception of Christ. Had not this been matter-of-fact, the Redeemer would never have pronounced it "easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Luke, 18: 25. There is in poverty what we may almost call a natural tendency to the leading men to dependence on God, and faith in his promises. On the other

hand, there is in wealth just as natural a tendency to the production of a spirit of haughty and infidel independence. The poor man, harassed with difficulties in earning a scanty subsistence for himself and his household, will have a readier ear for tidings of a bright home beyond the grave, than the rich man, who, lapped in luxury, can imagine nothing more delightful than the unbroken continuance of present enjoyments. Poverty, in short, is a humiliating and depressing thing; whilst affluence nurtures pride and elation of mind. And in proportion, therefore, as all which has kinsmanship with humility is favorable to piety, all which has kinsmanship with haughtiness unfavorable, we may fairly argue that the poor man has an advantage over the rich, considering them both as appointed to immortality.

But not only has God thus mercifully introduced a kind of natural counterpoise to the allowed evils of poverty: in the institution of a method of redemption, he may specially be said to have prepared for the mean and the destitute. There is nothing in the prescribed duties of religion, which, in the least degree, requires that a man should be a man of learning or leisure. We take the husbandman at his plough, or the manufacturer at his loom; and we can tell him, that, whilst he goes on, uninterruptedly, with his daily toil, the grand business of his soul's salvation may advance with an uniform march. We do not require that he should relax in his industry, or abstract some hours from usual occupations, in order to learn a complicated plan, and study a scheme which demands time and intellect for its mastery. The Gospel message is so exquisitely simple, the sum and substance of truth may be so gathered into brief and easily understood sentences, that all which it is absolutely necessary to know may be told in a minute, and borne about with him by the laborer in the field, or the mariner on the waters, or the soldier on the battle-plain. We reckon it far the most wonderful feature in the Bible, that, whilst presenting a sphere for the longest and most pains-taking research—exhibiting heights which no soarings of imagination can scale, and depths which no fathoming-line of intellect can explore—it sets forth the way of salva-

tion with so much of unadorned plainness, that it may as readily be understood by the child or the peasant, as by the full-grown man or the deep-read philosopher. Who will keep back the tribute of acknowledgment that God, of his own goodness, has prepared for the poor? If an individual be possessed of commanding genius, gifted with powers which far remove him from the herd of his fellows, he will find in the pages of Scripture beauties, and difficulties, and secrets, and wonders, which a long life-time of study shall leave unexhausted. But the man of no pretensions to talent, and of no opportunities for research, may turn to the Bible in quest of comfort and direction; and there he will find traced as with a sunbeam, so that none but the wilfully blind can overlook the record, guidance for the lost, and consolation for the downcast. We say that it is in this preparation for the poor that the word of God is most surprising. View the matter how you will, the Bible is as much the unlearned man's book as it is the learned, as much the poor man's as it is the rich. It is so composed as to suit all ages and all classes. And whilst the man of learning and capacity is poring upon the volume in the retirement of his closet, and employing all the stores of a varied literature on the illustrating its obscurities and the solving its difficulties, the laborer may be sitting at his cottage-door, with his boys and his girls drawn around him, explaining to them, from the simply-written pages, how great is the Almighty, and how precious is Jesus. Nay, we shall not overstep the boundaries of truth if we carry these statements yet a little further. We hold that the Bible is even more the poor man's book than the rich man's. There is a vast deal of the Bible which appears written with the express design of verifying our text, that God, of his goodness, has "prepared for the poor." There are many of the promises which seem to demand poverty as the element wherein alone their full lustre can radiate. The prejudices, moreover, of the poor man against the truths which the volume opens up are likely to be less strong, and inveterate, than those of the rich man. He seems to have, naturally, a kind of companionship with a suffering Redeemer, who



had not "where to lay his head." Luke, 8: 58. He can have no repugnance, but, on the contrary, a sort of instinctive attachment, to apostles who, like himself, wrought with their own hands for the supply of daily necessities. He can feel himself, if we may use such expression, at home in the scenery, and amongst the leading characters, of the New Testament. Whereas, on the other hand, the scientific man, and the man of education, and of influence, and of high bearing in society, will have prepossessions, and habits of thinking, with which the announcements of the Gospel will unavoidably jar. He has, as it were, to be brought down to the level of the poor man, before he can pass under the gateway which stands at the outset of the path of salvation. He has to begin by learning the comparative worthlessness of many distinctions, which, never having been placed within the poor man's reach, stand not as obstacles to his heavenward progress. And if there be correctness in this representation, it is quite evident that if the Gospel be, for the first time, put into the hands, or proclaimed in the hearing, of a man of rank and of a mean man, the likelihood is far greater that the mean man will lay hold, effectively and savingly, on the truth, than that the man of rank will thus grasp it: and our conclusion, therefore, comes out strong and irresistible, that, if there be advantage on either side, the Bible is even more nicely adapted to the poor than to the rich; and that, consequently, it is most emphatically true, that, "thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor."

But there is yet another point on which we think it well to turn briefly your attention; for it is one which is, oftentimes, not a little misunderstood. We know that what are termed the evidences of Christianity are of a costly and intricate description, scarcely accessible except to the studious. It is hardly to be supposed that the unlettered man can have mastered the external arguments which go to prove the divine origin of our faith. And if the Almighty have placed the witness for the truth of Christianity beyond the poor man's grasp, has he not left the poor man open to the inroads of scepticism; and how, therefore, can it be

said that he has of his goodness "prepared for the poor?" There is much in the aspect of the times which gives powerful interest to such a question as this. Whilst all ranks are assailed by the emissaries of infidelity, it is important that we see whether God has not prepared for all ranks some engines of resistance.

Now we are never afraid of subjecting the external evidences of Christianity to the most sifting processes which our adversaries can invent. We do not receive a religion without proof; and our proof we will bring to the best touchstones of truth. Christianity is not the grave, but the field of vigorous inquiry. And we see not, therefore, why scepticism should claim to itself a monopoly of intellect. The high-road to reputation for talent seems to be boldness in denying christianity. Ay, and many a young man passes now-a-days for a fine and original genius, who could not distinguish himself in the honorable competitions of an university, who makes no way in his profession, and is nothing better than a cypher in society; but who is of so independent a spirit that he can jeer at priestcraft in a club-room, and of so inventive a turn that he can ply Scripture with objections a hundred times refuted.

But the evidences of Christianity are not to be set aside by a sneer. We will take our stand as on a mount thrown up in the broad waste of many generations; and one century after another shall struggle forth from the sepulchres of the past; and each, as its monarchs, and its warriors, and its priests, walk dimly under review, shall lay down a tribute at the feet of Christianity. We will have the volume of history spread out before us, and bid science arrange her manifold developments, and seek the bones of martyrs in the east and in the west, and tread upon battle-plains with an empire's dust sepulchred beneath; but on whatsoever we gaze, and whithersoever we turn, the evidences of our religion shall look nobler, and wax mightier. It were the work of a life-time to gain even cursory acquaintance with the proofs which substantiate the claims of Christianity. It would beat down the energies of the most gifted and masterful spirit, to re-

quire it to search out, and concentrate, whatsoever attests the truth of the Gospel—for the mountains of the earth have a voice, and the cities, and the valleys, and the tombs; and the sail must be unfurled to bear the inquirer over every ocean, and the wings of the morning must carry him to the outskirts of infinite space. We will not concede that a more overwhelming demonstration would be given to the man who should stand side by side with a messenger from the invisible world, and hear from celestial lips the spirit-stirring news of redemption, and be assured of the reality of the interview by a fiery cross left stamped on his forehead, than is actually to be attained by him who sits down patiently and assiduously, and plies, with all the diligence of an unwearied laborer in the mine of information, at accumulating and arranging the evidences of christianity. So that we may well think ourselves warranted in contending that God has marvellously prepared for the faith of educated men. Scepticism, whatever its boasts, walks to its conclusions over a fettered reason, and a forgotten creation. And any man who will study carefully, and think candidly, shall rise from his inquiry a believer in revelation.

But what say we to the case of the poor man? How hath God, of his goodness, "prepared for the poor?" It may be certain that the external evidences of christianity amount to a demonstration, which, when fairly put, is altogether irresistible. But it is just as certain that the generality of believers can have little or no acquaintance with these evidences. It were virtually the laying an interdict on the christianity of the lower orders, to establish a necessity, that mastery of the evidences must precede belief in the doctrines of the Gospel. We can see no result but that of limiting the very existence of religion to the academy or the cloister, and prohibiting its circulation through the dense masses of our population, if the only method of certifying one's-self that the Bible is from God were that of searching through the annals of antiquity, and following out the testimony arranged by the labors of successive generations. And yet, on the other hand, it were just as fatal to the

christianity of our peasantry, to maintain that they take for granted the divine origin of the Gospel, and that they can give no better reason than that of long-established custom, why the Bible should be received as a communication from heaven. We say that this would be as fatal as the former supposition to the christianity of our peasantry. A belief which has nothing to rest on, deserves not to be designated belief; and, unable to sustain itself by reason, must yield at the first onset of scepticism.

But there can be nothing more unjust than the conclusion, that the poor man has no evidence within reach, because he has not the external. We will not allow that God has failed, in this respect, to prepare for the poor. We will go into the cottage of the poor disciple of Christ, and we will say to him, why do you believe upon Jesus? You know little or nothing about the witness of antiquity. You know little or nothing about the completion of prophecy. You can give me no logical, no grammatical, no historical reasons for concluding the Bible to be, what it professes itself, a revelation, made in early times, of the will of the Almighty. Why then do you believe upon Jesus? What grounds have you for faith, what basis of conviction?

Now if the poor man lay bare his experience, he will, probably, show how God hath prepared for him, by giving such a reply as the following: I lived long unconcerned about the soul. I thought only on the pleasures of today: I cared nothing for the worm which might gnaw me to-morrow. I was brought, however, by sickness, or by disappointment, or by the death of the one I best loved, or by a startling sermon, to fear that all was not right between me and God. I grew more and more anxious. Terrors haunted me by day, and sleep went from my pillow by night. At length I was bidden to look unto Jesus as "delivered for my offences, and raised again for my justification." Romans, 4: 25. Instantly I felt him to be exactly the Savior that I needed. Every want found in him an immediate supply; every fear a cordial; every wound a balm. And ever since, the more I have read of the Bible, the more have I found that it must have



been written on purpose for myself. It seems to know all my cares, all my temptations; and it speaks so beautifully a word in season, that he who wrote it must, I think, have had me in his eye. Why do I believe in Jesus? Oh, I feel him to be a Divine Savior—that is my proof. Why do I believe the Bible? I have found it to be God's word—there is my witness.

We think, assuredly, that if you take the experience of the generality of christians, you will find that they do not believe without proof. We again say, that we cannot assent to the proposition, that the christianity of our villages and hamlets takes for granted the truth of the Bible, and has no reason to give when that truth is called in question. The peasant who, when the hard toil of the day is concluded, will sit by his fireside, and read the Bible with all the eagerness, and all the confidence, of one who receives it as a message from God, has some better ground than common report, or the tradition of his forefathers, on which to rest his persuasion of the divinity of the volume. The book speaks to him with a force which he feels never could belong to a mere human composition. There is drawn such a picture of his own heart—a picture presenting many features which he would not have discovered, had they not been thus outlined, but which he recognizes as most accurate, the instant they are exhibited—that he can be sure that the painter is none other but he who alone searches the heart. The proposed deliverance agrees so wonderfully, and so minutely with his wants; it manifests such unbounded and equal concern for the honor of God, and the well-being of man; it provides, with so consummate a skill, that, whilst the human race is redeemed, the divine attributes shall be glorified; that it were like telling him that a creature spread out the firmament, and inlaid it with worlds, to tell him that the proffered salvation is the device of impostors, or the figment of enthusiasts. And thus the pious inmate of the workshop or the cottage "hath the witness in himself." 1 St. John, 5 : 10. The home-thrusts which he receives from "the sword of the Spirit," Ephesians, 6 : 17, are his evidence that the weapon is not of earthly manufac-

ture. The surprising manner in which texts will start, as it were, from the page, and become spoken things rather than written; so that the Bible, shaking itself from the trammels of the printing-press, seems to rush from the firmament in the breathings of the Omnipotent—this stamps Scripture to him as literally God's word—prophets and apostles may have written it, but the Almighty still utters it. And all this makes the evidence with which the poor man is prepared in defence of christianity. We do not represent it as an evidence which may successively be brought forward in professed combat with infidelity. It must have been experienced before it can be admitted; and not being of a nature to commend itself distinctly to the understanding of the sceptic, will be rejected by him as visionary, and therefore, received not in proof. But, if the self-evidencing power of Scripture render not the peasant a match for the unbeliever, it nobly secures him against being himself overborne. "The witness in himself," if it qualify him not, like science and scholarship, for the offensive, will render him quite impregnable, so long as he stands on the defensive. And we believe of many a village christian, who has never read a line on the evidences of christianity, and whose whole theology is drawn from the Bible itself, that he would be, to the full, as staunch in withstanding the emissaries of scepticism as the mightiest and best equipped of our learned divines; and that, if he could give no answer to his assailant whilst urging his chronological and historical objections, yet by falling back on his own experience, and entrenching himself within the manifestations of truth which have been made to his own conscience, he would escape the giving harborage, for one instant, to a suspicion that christianity is a fable; and holds fast, in all its beauty, and in all its integrity, the truth, that "we have an advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus the righteous, and he is the propitiation of our sins." 1 John, 2 : 1.

Yea, and it is a growing and strengthening evidence which God, of his goodness, has thus prepared for our poor. Whensoever they obey a direction of Scripture, and find the accompanying promise fulfilled, this is a new proof



that the direction and the promise are from God. The book tells them that blessings are to be sought and obtained through the name of Christ. They ask and they receive. What is this but a witness that the book is divine? Would God give his sanction to a lie? The book assures them that the Holy Spirit will gradually sanctify those who believe upon Jesus. They find the sanctification following on the belief; and does not this attest the authority of the volume? The book declares that "all things work together for good," Rom. 8 : 28, to the disciples of Jesus. They find that prosperity and adversity, as each brings its trials, so each its lessons and supports; and whilst God thus continually verifies a declaration, can they doubt that he made it? And thus, day by day, the self-evidencing power of Scripture comes into fuller operation, and experience multiplies and strengthens the internal testimony. The peasant will discover more and more that the Bible and the conscience so fit into each other, that the artificer who made one must have equally fashioned both. His life will be an ongoing proof that Scripture is truth; for his days and hours are its chapters and verses realized to the letter. And others may admire the shield which the industry and ingenuity of learned men have thrown over christianity. They may speak of the solid rampart cast up by the labor of ages; and pronounce the faith unassailable, because history, and philosophy, and science, have all combined to gird round it the iron, and the rock, of a ponderous and colossal demonstration. We, for our part, glory most in the fact, that Scripture so commends itself to the conscience, and experience so bears out the Bible, that the Gospel can go the round of the world, and carry with it, in all its travel, its own mighty credentials. And though we depreciate not, but rather confess thankfully, the worth of external evidence, we still think it the noblest provision of God, that if the external were destroyed, the internal would remain, and uphold splendidly christianity. There is nothing which we reckon more wonderful in arrangement, nothing more deserving all the warmth of our gratitude, than that divine truth, by its innate power, could

compel the Corinthian sceptic, 1 Cor. 14 : 25, to fall down upon his face; and that this truth, by the same innate power, can so satisfy a reader of its own origin, that ploughmen, as well as theologians, have reason for their hope; and the christianity of villages, as much as the christianity of universities, can defy infidelity, and hold on undaunted by all the buffetings of the adversary.

And if we now sum up this portion of our argument, we may say, that God has so constructed his word that it carries with it its own witness to the poor man's intellect, and the poor man's heart. Thus, although it were idle to contend that the poor can show you, with a learned precision, the authenticity of Scripture, or call in the aids which philosophy has furnished, or strengthen their faith from the wonderworkings of nature, or mount and snatch conviction from the glittering tracery on the overhead canopy; still they may feel, whilst perusing the Bible, that it so speaks to the heart, that it tells them so fully all they most want to know, that it so verifies itself in every-day experience, that it humbles them so much and rejoices them so much, that it strikes with such energy on every chord—in short, that it so commends itself to every faculty as purely divine—that they could sooner believe that God made not the stars, than that God wrote not the Scriptures: and thus, equipped with powerful machinery for resisting the infidel, they give proof the most conclusive, that "thou, O God, hast prepared, of thy goodness, for the poor."

Such are the illustrations which we would advance of the truth of our text, when reference is had to spiritual provision. We shall only, in conclusion, commend the subject to your earnest meditation; assuring you that the more it is examined, the more it will be found fraught with interest and instruction. There is something exquisitely touching in an exhibition of God as providing sedulously, both in temporal and spiritual things, for the poor and illiterate. "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season." Psalm 145 : 15. God is that marvellous being to whom the only great thing is Himself. A world is to Him an atom, and an atom is to

Him a world. And as, therefore, he cannot be mastered by what is vast and enormous, so he cannot overlook what is minute and insignificant. There is not, then, a smile on a poor man's cheek, and there is not a tear in a poor man's eye, either of which is independent on the providence of Him who gilds, with the lustre of his countenance, the unlimited concave, and measures, in the hollow of his hand, the waters of fathomless oceans. And that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them," Matt. 11 : 5, is one of the strongest evidences on the side of christianity. It was given to John the Baptist as a mark by which he might prove Christ the promised Messiah. He might hence learn that Jesus had come, not to make God known, exclusively, to the learned and great; but that, breaking loose from the trammels of a figurative dispensation, he was dealing with the mechanic at his wheel, and with the slave at his drudgery, and with the beggar in his destitution. Had Christ sent to the imprisoned servant of the Lord, and told him he was fascinating the philosopher with sublime disclosures of the nature of Deity, and drawing after him the learned of the earth by powerful and rhetorical delineations of the wonders of the invisible world; that, all the while, he had no communications for the poor and commonplace crowd; why, John might have been dazzled, for a time, by the splendor of his miracles, and he might have mused, wonderingly, on the displayed ascendancy over diseases and death; but, quickly, he must have thought, this is not revealing God to the ignorant and destitute, and this cannot be the religion designed for all nations and ranks. But when the announcement of wonder workings was followed by the declaration that glad tidings of deliverance were being published to the poor, the Baptist would readily perceive, that the long looked-for close to a limited dispensation was contemplated in the mission of Jesus; that Jesus, in short, was introducing precisely the system which Messiah might be expected to introduce; and thus, finding that the doctrines bore out the miracles, he would admit at once his pretensions, not merely because he gave sight to the blind, but because, preaching the

Gospel to the ignorant, he showed that God, of his goodness, had prepared for the poor.

And that the Gospel should be adapted, as well as preached, to the poor—adapted in credentials as well as in doctrines—this is one of those arrangements, which, as devised, show infinite love, as executed, infinite wisdom. Who will deny that God hath thrown himself into christianity, even as into the system of the visible universe, since the meanest can trace his footsteps, and feel themselves environed with the marchings of the Eternal One? Oh, we do think it cause of mighty gratulation, in days when infidelity, no longer confining itself to literary circles, has gone down to the homes and haunts of our peasantry, and seeks to prosecute an impious crusade amongst the very lowest of our people—we do think it cause of mighty gratulation, that God should have thus garrisoned the poor against the inroads of scepticism. We have no fears for the vital and substantial christianity of the humbler classes of society. They may seem, at first sight, unequipped for the combat. On a human calculation, it might mount almost to a certainty, that infidel publications, or infidel men, working their way into the cottages of the land, would gain an easy victory, and bear down, without difficulty, the faith and piety of the unprepared inmates. But God has had a care for the poor of the flock. He loves them too well to leave them defenceless. And now—appealing to that witness which every one who believes will find in himself—we can feel that the christianity of the illiterate has in it as much of stamina as the christianity of the educated; and we can, therefore, be confident that the scepticism which shrinks from the batteries of the learned theologian, will gain no triumphs at the firesides of our God-fearing rustics.

We thank thee, O Father of heaven and earth, that thou hast thus made the Gospel of thy Son its own witness, and its own rampart. We thank thee that thou didst so breathe thyself into apostles and prophets, that their writings are thine utterance, and declare to all ages thine authorship. And now, what have we to ask, but that, if there



be one here who has hitherto been stouthearted and unbelieving, the delivered word may prove itself divine, by "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit;" Heb. 4: 12; and that, whilst we announce that "God is angry with the wicked;" Psalm 7: 11; that those who forget Him shall be turned into hell; but that, nevertheless, he hath "so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son," John, 3: 16, for its redemption

—oh, we ask that the careless one, hearing truths at once so terrifying, and so encouraging, may be humbled to the dust, and yet animated with hope; and that, stirred by the divinity which embodies itself in the message, he may flee, "poor in spirit," Mat. 5: 3, to Jesus, and, drawing out of his fulness, be enabled to testify to all around, that "thou, O God, hast of thy goodness prepared for the poor."

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## SERMON IX.

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### ST. PAUL A TENT-MAKER.

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"And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them and wrought, for by their occupation they were tent-makers."—Acts, 18 : 3.

The argument which may be drawn, in support of christianity, from the humble condition of its earliest teachers, is often, and fairly, insisted on in disputations with the sceptic. We scarcely know a finer vantage-ground, on which the champion of truth can plant himself, than that of the greater credulity which must be shown in the rejection, than in the reception, of christianity. We mean to assert, in spite of the tauntings of those most thorough of all bondsmen, free-thinkers, that the faith required from deniers of revelation is far larger than that demanded from its advocates. He who thinks that the setting up of christianity may satisfactorily be accounted for on the supposition of its falsehood, taxes credulity a vast deal more than he who believes all the prodigies, and all the miracles, recorded in Scripture. The most marvellous of all prodigies, and the most surpassing of all mira-

cles, would be the progress of the christian religion, supposing it untrue. And, assuredly, he who has wrought himself into the belief that such a wonder has been exhibited, can have no right to boast himself shrewder, and more cautious, than he who holds, that, at human bidding, the sun stood still, or that tempests were hushed, and graves rified, at the command of one "found in fashion" as ourselves. The fact that christianity strode onward with a resistless march, making triumphant way against the banded power, and learning, and prejudices of the world—this fact, we say, requires to be accounted for; and inasmuch as there is no room for questioning its accuracy, we ask, in all justice, to be furnished with its explanation. We turn, naturally, from the result to the engines by which, to all human appearance, the result was brought round; from the system preached to the preachers themselves. Were



those who first propounded christianity men who, from station in society, and influence over their fellows, were likely to succeed in palming falsehood on the world? Were they possessed of such machinery of intelligence, and wealth, and might, and science, that—every allowance being made for human credulity and human infatuation—there would appear the very lowest probability, that, having forged a lie, they could have caused it speedily to be venerated as truth, and carried along the earth's diameter amid the worshippings of thousands of the earth's population? We have no intention, on the present occasion, of pursuing the argument. But we are persuaded that no candid mind can observe the speed with which christianity overran the civilized world, compelling the homage of kings, and casting down the altars of long-cherished superstitions; and then compare the means with the effect—the apostles, men of low birth, and poor education, backed by no authority, and possessed of none of those high-wrought endowments which mark out the achievers of difficult enterprise—we are persuaded, we say, that no candid mind can set what was done side by side with the apparatus through which it was effected, and not confess, that, of all incredible things, the most incredible would be, that a few fishermen of Galilee vanquished the world, upheaving its idolatries, and mastering its prejudices, and yet that their only weapon was a lie, their only mechanism jugglery and deceit.

And this it is which the sceptic believes. Yea, on his belief of this he grounds claims to a sounder, and shrewder, and less fettered understanding, than belongs to the mass of his fellows. He deems it the mark of a weak and ill-disciplined intellect to admit the truth of Christ's raising the dead; but appeals, in proof of a stanch and well-informed mind, to his belief that this whole planet was convulsed by the blow of an infant. He scorns the narrow-mindedness of submission to what he calls priestcraft; but counts himself large-minded, because he admits that a priestcraft, only worthy his contempt, ground into powder every system which he thinks worthy of his admiration. He laughs at the credu-

lity of supposing that God had to do with the institution of christianity; and then applauds the sobriety of referring to chance what bears all the marks of design—proving himself rational by holding that causes are not necessary to effects.

Thus we recur to our position, that, if the charge of credulity must be fastened on either the opponents, or the advocates, of christianity, then, of the two, the opponents lie vastly most open to the accusation. Men pretend to a more than ordinary wisdom because they reject, as incredible, occurrences and transactions which others account for as supernatural. But where is their much-vaunted wisdom, when it can be shown, to a demonstration, that they admit things a thousand-fold stranger than those, which, with all the parade of intellectual superiority, they throw from them as too monstrous for credence? We give it you as a truth, susceptible of the rigor of mathematical proof, that the phenomena of christianity can only be explained by conceding its divinity. If christianity came from God, there is an agency adequate to the result; and you can solve its making way amongst the nations. But if christianity came not from God, no agency can be assigned at all commensurate with the result; and you cannot account for its marchings over the face of the earth. So that when—setting aside every other consideration—we mark the palpable unfitness of the apostles for devising, and carrying into effect, a grand scheme of imposture, we feel that we do right in retorting on the sceptic the often-urged charge of credulity. We tell him, that, if it prove a clear-sighted intellect, to believe that unsupported men would league in an enterprise which was nothing less than a crusade against the world; that ignorant men could concoct a system overpassing, confessedly, the wisdom of the noblest of the heathen; and that the insignificant and unequipped band would go through fire and water, brave the lion and dare the stake, knowing, all the while, that they battled for a lie, and crowned, all the while, with overpowering success—ay, we tell the sceptic, that, if a belief such as this prove a clear-sighted intellect, he is welcome to the laurels of

reason: and we, for our part, shall contentedly herd with the irrational, who are weak enough to think it credible that the apostles were messengers from God; and only incredible that mountains fell when there was nothing to shake them, and oceans dried up when there was nothing to drain them, and that there passed over a creation an unmeasured revolution, without a cause, and without a mover, and without a Deity.

Now we have advanced these hurried remarks on a well-known topic of christian advocacy, because our text leads us, as it were, into the workshop of the first teachers of our faith, and thus forces on us the contemplation of their lowly and destitute estate. It is not, however, our design to pursue further the argument. We may derive other, and not less important, lessons from the simple exhibition of Paul, and Aquila, and Priscilla, plying their occupation as tent-makers. It should just be premised, that, so far as Paul himself is concerned, we must set down his laboring for a living as actually a consequence on his preaching christianity. Before he engaged in the service of Christ, he had occupied a station in the upper walks of society, and was not, we may believe, dependent on his industry for his bread. It was, however, the custom of the Jews to teach children, whatever the rank of their parents, some kind of handicraft; so that, in case of a reverse of circumstances, they might have a resource to which to betake themselves. We conclude that, in accordance with this custom, St. Paul, as a boy, had learned the art of tent-making; though he may not have exercised it for a subsistence until he had spent all in the service of Jesus. We appeal not, therefore, to the instance of this great apostle to the Gentiles as confirming, in every respect, our foregoing argument. St. Paul was eminent both for learning and talent. And it would not, therefore, be just to reason from his presumed incompetency to carry on a difficult scheme, since, at the least, he was not disqualified for undertakings which crave a master-spirit at their head. It is certain, however, that, in these respects, St. Paul was an exception to the rest of the first preachers of chris-

tianity. Our general reasoning, therefore, remains quite unaffected, whatever be urged in regard to a particular case.

But we have already said, that the main business of our discourse is to derive other lessons from our text than that which refers to the evidences of christianity. We wave, therefore, further inquiry into that proof of the divinity of the system which is furnished by the poverty of the teachers. We will sit down, as it were, by St. Paul whilst busied with his tent-making; and, considering who and what the individual is who thus lives by his artisanship, draw that instruction from the scene which we may suppose it intended to furnish.

Now called as St. Paul had been by miracle to the apostleship of Christ, so that he was suddenly transformed from a persecutor into a preacher of the faith, we might well look to find in him a pre-eminent zeal; just as though the unearthly light, which flashed across his path, had entered into his heart, and lit up there a fire inextinguishable by the deepest waters of trouble. And it is beyond all peradventure, that there never moved upon our earth a heartier, more unwearied, more energetic, disciple of Jesus. His motto was to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;" Phil. 2 : 8; and crossing seas, and exhausting continents, till a vast portion of the known world had heard from his lips the tidings of redemption, he proved the motto engraven on his soul, and showed that the desire of bringing the perishing into acquaintance with a Savior was nothing less than the life's-blood of his system. And we are bound to suppose, that, where there existed so glowing a zeal, prompting him to be "instant in season, out of season," 2 Tim. 4 : 2, the irksomeness of mechanical labor must have been greater than it is easy to compute. Since the whole soul was wrapped up in the work of the ministry, it could not have been without a feeling, amounting almost to painfulness, that the apostle abstracted himself from the business of his embassy, and toiled at providing for his own bodily necessities. We see, at once, that so far as any appointment of God could be grievous to a man of St. Paul's ex-



emplary holiness, this appointment must have been hard to endure: and we cannot contemplate the great apostle, withdrawn from the spirit-stirring scenes of his combats with idolatry, and earning a meal like a common artificer, and not feel, that the effort of addressing the Athenians, congregated on Areopagus, was as nothing to that of sitting down patiently to all the drudgery of the craftsman.

But we go on to infer from these unquestionable facts, that, unless there had been great ends which St. Paul's laboring subserved, God would not have permitted this sore exercise of his servant. There is allotted to no christian a trial without a reason. And if then we are once certified, that the working for his bread was a trial to St. Paul, we must go forward and investigate the reasons of the appointment.

Now we learn from the epistles of St. Paul, that when he refused to be maintained by the churches which he planted, it was through fear that the success of his preaching might be interfered with by suspicions of his disinterestedness. He chose to give the Gospel without cost, in order that his enemies might have no plea for representing him as an hireling, and thus depreciating his message. In this respect he appears to have acted differently from the other apostles, since we find him thus expostulating with the Corinthians: "have we not power to eat and to drink? or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" 1 Cor. 9 : 4, 6. He evidently argues, that, had he so pleased, he might justly have done what his fellow-apostles did, receive temporal benefits from those to whom they were the instruments of communicating spiritual. It was a law, whose justice admitted not of controversy, that "the laborer is worthy of his hire." 1 Tim. 5 : 18. And, therefore, however circumstances might arise, rendering it advisable that the right should be waved, St. Paul desired the Corinthians to understand, that, had he chosen, he might have claimed the sustenance for which he was contented to toil. It was a right, and not a favor, which he waved. And if there were no other lesson deducible from the manual occupation of the apostle, we should do well to ponder the direction thus

practically given, that we remove all occasions of offence. St. Paul gave up even his rights, fearing lest their enforcement might possibly impede the progress of the Gospel. So single-eyed was this great teacher of the Gentiles, that when the reception of the message, and the maintenance of the messenger, seemed at all likely to clash, he would gladly devote the day to the service of others, and then toil through the night to make provision for himself. If ever, therefore, it happen, either to minister or to people, to find that the pushing a claim, or the insisting on a right would bring discredit, though unjustly and wrongfully, on the cause of religion; let it be remembered that our prime business, as professors of godliness, is with the glory of God and the advance of the Gospel; that the avoiding evil is a great thing, but that the scriptural requisition is, that we avoid even the "appearance of evil." 1 Thess. 5 : 22. And if there seem to us a hardness in this, so that we count it too much of concession, that we fall back from demands which strict justice would warrant, let us betake ourselves, for an instant, to the workshop of St. Paul; and there remembering, whilst this servant of Christ is fashioning the canvass, that he labors for bread, which, by an indisputable title, is already his own, we may learn, it a christian's duty to allow himself to be wronged, when, by stanch standing to his rights, Christ's cause may be injured.

But as yet we are only on the outskirts of our subject. The grand field of inquiry still remains to be traversed. We have seen, that, in order to foreclose all question of his sincerity and disinterestedness, St. Paul chose to ply at his tent-making rather than derive a maintenance from his preaching. We next observe, that, had not his poverty been on other accounts advantageous, we can scarcely think that this single reason would have procured its permission. He might have refused to draw an income from his converts, and yet not have been necessitated to betake himself to handicraft. We know that God could have poured in upon him, through a thousand channels, the means of subsistence; and we believe, therefore, that had his toiling subserved no end but the removal of causes of of-



fence, his wants would have been supplied, though without any burden on the churches. So that the question comes before us, unsolved and unexamined, why was it permitted that St. Paul, in the midst of his exertions as a minister of Christ, should be compelled to support himself by manual occupation? We think that two great reasons may be advanced, each of which will deserve a careful examination. In the first place, God hereby put much honor upon industry: in the second place, God hereby showed, that where he has appointed means, he will not work by miracles. We will take these reasons in succession, proceeding at once to endeavor to prove, that, in leaving St. Paul to toil as a tent-maker, God put much honor upon industry.

Now it is true that the appointment, "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," Gen. 3 : 19, was part of the original malediction which apostacy caused to be breathed over this creation. But it is equally true that labor was God's ordinance whilst man kept unsullied his loyalty, and that it was not bound upon our race as altogether a consequence on transgression. We may not believe that in paradise labor could ever have been wearisome; but we know that, from the first, labor was actually man's business. We are told, in the book of Genesis, that when the Lord God had planted the garden, and fashioned man after his own image, "he took the man and put him into the garden, to dress it, and to keep it." Gen. 2 : 15. There was no curse upon the ground; and, therefore, we suppose not that it required, ere it would give forth a produce, the processes of a diligent husbandry. But, nevertheless, it is clear that the resting of God's first blessing on the soil put not aside all necessity of culture. Man was a laborer from the beginning: God's earliest ordinance appearing to have been that man should not be an idler. So that whilst we admit that all that painfulness and exhaustion, which waits ordinarily upon human occupation, must be traced up to disobedience as a parent, we contend that employment is distinctly God's institution for mankind, no reference whatsoever being made to the innocence or guiltiness of the race. God sanctified the seventh

day as a day of rest, before Adam disobeyed, and thus marked out six days as days of labor and employment, before sin sowed the seeds of the thorn and the thistle. We may suppose, that, previously to the fall, labor, so to speak, was just one department of piety; and that in tilling the ground, or watching the herds, man was as religiously occupied as when communing with God in distinct acts of devotion. The great and fatal alteration which sin has introduced into labor, is, that a wide separation has been made between temporal business and spiritual; so that, whilst engaged in providing for the body, we seem wholly detached from paying attention to the concerns of the soul. But we hold it of first-rate importance to teach men that this separation is of their own making, and not of God's appointing. God ordained labor: and God also ordained that man's great business on earth should be to secure his soul's safety through eternity. And unless, therefore, we admit that the work of the soul's salvation may be actually advanced by, and through, our worldly occupations, we set one ordinance of God against another, and represent ourselves as impeded, by the appointments of our Maker, in the very business most pressed on our performance. The matter-of-fact is, that God may as truly be served by the husbandman whilst ploughing up his ground, and by the manufacturer whilst toiling at his loom, and by the merchant whilst engaged in his commerce, as he can be by any of these men when gathered by the Sabbath-bell to the solemn assembly. It is a perfect libel on religion, to represent the honest trades of mankind as aught else but the various methods in which God may be honored and obeyed. We do not merely mean that worldly occupations may be followed without harm done to the soul. This would be no vindication of God's ordinance of labor. We mean that they may be followed with benefit to the soul. When God led the eastern magi to Christ, he led them by a star. He attacked them, so to speak, through the avenue of their profession. Their great employment was that of observing the heavenly bodies. And God sanctified their astronomy. He might have taught them

by other methods which seem to us more direct. But it pleased Him to put honor on their occupation, and to write his lessons in that glittering alphabet with which their studies had made them especially conversant. We believe, in like manner, that if men went to their daily employments with something of the temper which they bring to the ordinances of grace, expecting to receive messages from God through trade, and through labor, as well as through preaching and a communion, there would be a vast advancing towards spiritual excellence; and men's experience would be, that the Almighty can bring them into acquaintance with himself, by the ploughshare, and the balances, and the cargo, no less than by the homily, and the closet exercises, and the public devotions. There would be an anticipation of the glorious season, sketched out by prophecy, when "there shall be upon the bells of the horses, holiness unto the Lord, and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." Zechariah, 14 : 20.

We give this as our belief; and we advance as our reason, the fact that labor is the ordinance of God. We will not have industry set against piety; as though the little time which men can snatch from secular engagements were the only time which they can give to their Maker. They may give all to God, and, nevertheless, be compelled to rise early, and late take rest, in order to earn a scanty subsistence. And we think, that, in placing an apostle under the necessity of laboring for bread, God assigned precisely that character to industry for which we contend. We learn, from the exhibition of our text, that there is no inconsistency between the being a devoted servant of Christ, and the following assiduously a toilsome occupation. Nay, we learn that it may be, literally, as the servant of Christ that man follows the occupation; for it was, as we have shown you, with decided reference to the interests of religion, that St. Paul joined Aquila and Priscilla in tent-making. At the least, there is a registered demonstration in the case of this apostle, that unwearied industry—for he elsewhere declares that he labored day and night—may consist with pre-emi-

nent piety; and that, so far from the pressure of secular employment being a valid excuse for slow progress in godliness, a man may have to struggle against absolute pauperism, and yet grow, every moment, a more admirable christian. Oh, there is something in this representation of the honor put by God upon industry, which should tell powerfully on the feelings of those to whom life is one long striving for the means of subsistence. It were as nothing to tell men, you may be good christians in spite of your engrossing employments. The noble truth is, that these employments may be so many helpers on of religion; and that, in place of serving as leaden weights, which retard a disciple in his celestial career, they may be as the well-plumed wings, accelerating gloriously the onward progress. In laboring to support himself, St. Paul labored to advance Christ's cause. And though there be not always the same well defined connection between our toils for a livelihood and the interests of religion, yet, let a connection be practically sought after, and it will always be practically found. The case exists not in which, after making it obligatory on a man that he work for his bread, God has not arranged, that, in thus working, he may work also for the well-being of his soul. If ever, therefore, we met with an individual who pleaded that there were already so many calls upon his time that he could not find leisure to give heed to religion, we should not immediately bear down upon him with the charge—though it might be a just one—of an undue pursuit of the things of this earth. We should only require of him to show that his employments were scripturally lawful, both in nature and intension. We should then meet him, at once, on the ground of this lawfulness. We should tell him that employments were designed to partake of the nature of sacraments; that, in place of their being excuses for his not serving God, they were appointed as instruments by which he might serve Him; and that, consequently, it was only because he had practically dissolved a partnership which the Almighty had formed, the partnership between industry and piety, that he was driving on, with a reckless speed, to a disastrous and des-



perate bankruptcy. And if he pretended to doubt that piety and industry have thus been associated by God, we would take him with us into the work-chamber of St. Paul; and there showing him the apostle toiling against want, and yet, in toiling, serving Christ Jesus—subsisting by his artisanship, and yet feeding the zeal of his soul by and through his labors for the support of his body—we would tell the questioner, that God thus caused a mighty specimen to be given of an instituted connection between secular employment and spiritual improvement; and whilst we send him to the writings of St. Paul that he may learn what it is to be industriously religious, we send him to the tent-making of St. Paul that he may learn what it is to be religiously industrious.

Now we might insist at greater length, if not pressed by the remainder of our subject, on the honor which God put upon industry when he left St. Paul to toil for a maintenance. But we leave this point to be further pondered in your private meditations. We go on, according to the arrangements of our discourse, to open up the second reason which we ventured to assign for this allowed dependence of an apostle upon labor for subsistence.

We stated as our second reason, that God designed hereby to inform us, that where he has appointed means he will not work by miracles. We observe that unto St. Paul had been given a superhuman energy, so that, when it was required as a witness to his doctrine, he could remove diseases by a word or a touch, and even restore life to the dead. We have no distinct information whether men, thus supernaturally equipped, could employ the power at every time, and for every purpose. But it seems most consistent with Scripture and reason to suppose, that, when specially moved by God, they could always work miracles; but that, unless thus moved, their strength went from them, and they remained no mightier than their fellows. It does not appear that apostles could have recourse to wonder-workings in every exigence which might arise. At least, it is certain that apostolical men, such as Epaphroditus and Timothy, went through sicknesses, and suffered from weaknesses, without

being cured by miracle, and without, as it would seem, being taxed with deficiency of faith, because they shook not off the malady, or resisted not its approaches. When St. Paul writes to Timothy in regard to his infirmities, he bids him use wine as a medicine; he does not tell him to seek faith to work a miracle. Yet, beyond all doubt, Timothy had received the gifts of the Spirit. And from this, and other instances, we infer that then only could miracles be wrought, when, by a distinct motion of the Holy Ghost, faith was directed to some particular achievement. It did not follow that because St. Peter, by a word, had struck down Ananias, he might, by a word, have immediately afterwards raised him up. It was not at his option what direction the miracle-working faith should take. Whensoever a miracle was wrought, it was wrought, unquestionably, by faith. But the faith, first given by God, required ever after to be stirred into exercise by God; so that no conclusion could be more erroneous, than that faith must have been defective, where miracle was not wrought.

Now we advance these remarks, in order to justify our not claiming for St. Paul, what, at first sight, we are disposed to claim, the praise of extraordinary self-denial in gaining his bread by labor, when he might have gained it by miracle. We may not suppose, that, because he displayed oftentimes a superhuman power, he could necessarily, had he wished it, have used that power in supplying his bodily wants. It may seem to us no greater effort, to multiply, as Christ did, a loaf into hundreds, than to command, as St. Paul did, the impotent man at Lystra to stand upright on his feet. Yet it were a false conclusion that the apostle might have done the one as well as the other.

The working of miracles presupposed, as we have shown you, not only God's giving the faith, but also God's permitting, or rather God's directing, its exercise. We build, therefore, no statements on the supposition that St. Paul had the power, but used it not, of procuring food by miracle. We rather conclude that he had no alternative whatever; so that, had he not labored at tent-making, he must have been absolutely destitute. It was not in-



deed because deficient in faith that he wrought not a miracle. He had the faith by which lofty hills might be stirred, provided only—and it is this proviso which men strangely overlook—that he, who had given him the faith, directed him to employ it on up-heaving the earth's mountains.

But we are thus brought down to the question, why was St. Paul not permitted, or not directed, to use the wonder-working energy, in place of being necessitated to apply himself to manual occupation? We give as our reply, that God might hereby have designed to communicate the important truth, that, where he has appointed means, we are not to look for miracles. Labor was his own ordinance. So long, therefore, as labor could be available to the procuring subsistence, he would not supersede this ordinance by miraculous interference. There is, perhaps, no feature more strongly charactered on God's dealings, whether in natural things or in spiritual, than that it is in the use of means, and in this alone, that blessings may be expected. We see clearly that this is God's procedure in reference to the affairs of our present state of being. If the husbandman neglect the processes of agriculture, there comes no miracle to make up this omission of means; but harvest-time finds barrenness reigning over the estate. If the merchantman sit with his hands folded, when he ought to be busied with shipping his merchandise, there is nothing to be expected but that beggary will ensue upon idleness. And we hold that instances such as these, so familiar that they are often overlooked, must be taken as illustrations of a great principle whose workings permeate all God's dispensations. We would contend that there is to be traced in our spiritual affairs that very honoring of means which is thus observable in our temporal. We know nothing of the fitness, which some men are disposed to uphold, of waiting the effectual calling of the Holy Ghost, and so of making no effort, till irresistibly moved, to escape from the bondage of corruption. We know of no scriptural method of addressing transgressors but as free agents; and we abjure, as un-sanctioned by the Bible, every scheme of theology which would make men

nothing more than machines. It must lie at the foundation of all religion, whether natural or revealed, that men are responsible beings; and responsible they cannot be, if placed under an invincible moral constraint, which allows no freedom whatsoever of choice. And we think it a thing to be sorely lamented, that there goes on a battling about election and non-election; the combatants on each side failing to perceive, that they fight for the profile, and not the full face of truth. It seems to us as plain from the Bible as language can make it, that God hath elected a remnant to life. It is just as plain, that all men are addressed as capable of repenting, and at liberty to choose for themselves between life and death. Thus we have scriptural warranty of God's election; and we have also scriptural warranty of man's free agency. But how can these apparently opposite statements be reconciled? I know not. The Bible tells me not. But because I cannot be wise beyond what is written, God forbid that I should refuse to be wise up to what is written. Scripture reveals, but it does not reconcile, the two. What then? I receive both, and I preach both; God's election and man's free agency. But I should esteem it of all presumptions the boldest to attempt explanation of the co-existence.

In like manner, the Bible tells me explicitly that Christ was God; and it tells me, as explicitly, that Christ was man. It does not go on to state the *modus* or manner of the union. I stop, therefore, where the Bible stops. I bow before a God-man as my Mediator, but I own as inscrutable the mysteries of his person.

It is thus also with the doctrine of the Trinity. Three persons are set before me as equally divine. At the same time, I am taught that there is only one God. How can the three be one, and the one be three? Silent as the grave is the Bible on this wonder. But I do not reject its speech because of its silence. I believe in three divine persons, because told of a Trinity; I believe in one only God, because told of an Unity: but I leave to the developments of a noble sphere of existence the clearing up the marvel of a Trinity in Unity.

The admission, then, of the co-ex-

istence of election and free-agency is but the counterpart of many other admissions which are made, on all hands, by the believers in revelation. And having assured ourselves of this joint existence, we see at once that man's business is to set about the work of his salvation, with all the ardor, and all the pains taking, of one convinced that he cannot perish, except through his own fault. We address him as an immortal creature whose destinies are in his own keeping. We will hear nothing of a secret decree of God, insuring him a safe passage to a haven of rest, or leaving him to go down a wreck in the whirlpool. But we tell him of a command of God, summoning him to put forth all his strength, and all his seamanship, ere the breakers dash against him, and the rocks rise around him. We thus deal with man as a responsible being. You are waiting for a miracle; have you tried the means? You are trusting to a hidden purpose; have you submitted yourselves to a revealed command? Sitting still is no proof of election. Grappling with evil is a proof; and wrenching one's-self from hurtful associations is a proof; and studying God's word is a proof; and praying for assistance is a proof. He who resolves to do nothing until he is called—oh, the likelihood is beyond calculation, that he will have no call, till the sheeted dead are starting at the trumpet-call. And the vessel—freighted as she was with noble capacities, with intelligence, and reason, and forethought, and the deep throbbings of immortality—what account shall be given of her making no way towards the shores of the saint's home, but remaining to be broken up piecemeal by the sweepings of the judgment? Simply, that God told man of a compass, and of a chart, and of a wind and a pilot. But man determined to remain anchored, until God should come and tear the ship from her moorings. God has appointed means. If we will use them diligently, and prayerfully, we may look for a blessing. But if we despise and neglect them, we must not look for a miracle.

And if a man be resolved to give harborage to the idea that means may be dispensed with, and that then mi-

racles will be wrought, we open before him the scenery of our text, and bid him behold the artificers at their labor. We tell him, that around one of these workmen the priests of Jupiter had thronged, bearing garlands, and bringing sacrifices, because of a displayed mastery over inveterate disease. We tell him, that, if there arose an occasion demanding the exhibition of prodigy in support of Christ's Gospel, this toiling artisan could throw aside the implements of trade, and, rushing into the crowded arena, confound an army of opponents by suspending the known laws of nature. And, nevertheless, this mightily-gifted individual must literally starve, or drudge for a meal like the meanest mechanic. And why so? why, but because it is a standing appointment of God, that miracles shall not supercede means? If there were no means, Paul should have his bread by miracle. But whilst there is the canvass, and the cord, and the sight in the eye, and the strength in the limb, he may carry on the trade of a tent-maker. He has the tools of his craft: let him use them industriously, and not sit inactive, hoping to be supported miraculously. And, arguing from this as a thorough specimen of God's ordinary dealings, we tell the expectant of an effectual call, that he waits as an idler whilst God requires him to work as a laborer. Where are the tools? Why left on the ground, when they should be in the hand? Where are the means? Why passed over, when they ought to be employed? Why neglected, when they should be honored? Why treated as worthless, when God declares them efficacious? It is true that conversion is a miracle. But God's common method of working this miracle is through the machinery of means. It is true that none but the elect can be saved. But the only way to ascertain election is to be laborious in striving. I read St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans; and I find the apostle saying, "so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. 9 : 16. What then? Must I, on this account, run not, but sit still, expecting the approaches of mercy? Away with the thought. Means are God's high road to miracles. I turn from the apostle writing to the Ro-



mans to the apostle toiling at Corinth. And when I look on the labors of the tent-maker, and infer from them that miracles must not be expected where means have been instituted, and that, consequently, whensoever God has appointed means, miracle is to be looked for only in their use; oh, in place of loitering because I have read of election, I would gird up the loins as having gazed on the tent-making; and in place of running not, because it is "of God that showeth mercy," run might and main, because it is to those who are running that he shows it.

When God decrees an end, he decrees also the means. If then he have elected me to obtain salvation in the next life, he has elected me to the practice of holiness in this life. Would I ascertain my election to the blessedness of eternity? it must be by practically demonstrating my election to newness of life. It is not by the rapture of feeling, and by the luxuriance of thought, and by the warmth of those desires which descriptions of heaven may stir up within me, that I can prove myself predestined to a glorious inheritance. If I would find out what is hidden, I must follow what is revealed. The way to heaven is disclosed; am I walking in that way? It would be poor proof that I were on my voyage to India, that, with glowing eloquence and thrilling poetry, I could discourse on the palm-groves and the spice-isles of the East. Am I on the waters? Is the sail hoisted to the wind; and does the land of my birth look blue and faint in the distance? The doctrine of election may have done harm to many—but only because they have fancied themselves elected to the end, and have forgotten that those whom Scripture calls elected are elected to the means. The Bible never speaks of men as elected to be saved from the shipwreck; but only as elected to tighten the ropes, and hoist the sails, and stand to the rudder. Let a man search faithfully; let him see that when Scripture describes christians as elected, it is, as elected to faith, as elected to sanctification, as elected to obedience; and the doctrine of election will be nothing but a stimulus to effort. It cannot act as a soporific. It cannot lull me into security. It cannot engender licentious-

ness. It will throw ardor into the spirit, and fire into the eye, and vigor into the limb. I shall cut away the boat, and let drive all human devices, and gird myself, amid the fierceness of the tempest, to steer the shattered vessel into port.

Now having thus examined the reasons why St. Paul was left dependent upon labor for subsistence, we hasten at once to wind up our subject. We have had under review two great and interesting truths. We have seen that labor is God's ordinance. Be it yours, therefore, to strive earnestly that your worldly callings may be sanctified, so that trade may be the helpmate of religion, instead of its foe and assassin. We have seen, also, that, when God has instituted means, we can have no right to be looking for miracles. Will ye then sit still, expecting God to compel you to move? Will ye expose yourselves wantonly to temptation, expecting God to make you impregnable? Will ye take the viper to your bosoms, expecting God to charm away the sting? Will ye tamper with the poison-cup, expecting God to neutralize the hemlock? Then why did not St. Paul, in place of working the canvass into a tent, expect God to convert it into food? We do not idolize means. We do not substitute the means of grace for grace itself. But this we say—and we beseech you to carry with you the truth to your homes—when God has made a channel, he may be expected to send through that channel the flowings of his mercy. Oh! that ye were anxious; that ye would take your right place in creation, and feel yourselves immortal! Be men, and ye make a vast advance towards being Christians. Many of you have long refused to labor to be saved. The implements are in your hands, but you will not work at the tent-making. Ye will not pray; ye will not shun temptation; ye will not renounce known sin; ye will not fight against evil habits. Are ye stronger than God? Can ye contend with the Eternal One? Have ye the nerve which shall not tremble, and the flesh which shall not quiver, and the soul which shall not quail, when the sheet of fire is round the globe, and thousand times ten thousand angels line the sky, and call to judgment?



If we had a spell by which to bind the ministers of vengeance, we might go on in idleness. If we had a charm by which to take what is scorching from the flame, and what is gnawing from the worm, we might continue the careless. But if we can feel; if we are not pain-proof; if we are not wrath-proof; let us arise, and be doing, and, with

fear and trembling, work out salvation. There shall yet burst on this creation a day of fire and of storm, and of blood—oh! conform yourselves to the simple prescriptions of the Bible; seek the aids of God's Spirit by prayer, and ye shall be led to lay hold on Christ Jesus by faith.

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## SERMON X.

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### THE ADVANTAGES OF A STATE OF EXPECTATION.

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“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.”  
Lamentations, 3 : 26.

You will find it said in the Book of Ecclesiastes, “Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him.” Eccl. 8 : 6. It seems to us implied in these words, that our incapacity of looking into the future has much to do with the production of disquietude and unhappiness. And there is no question, that the darkness in which we are compelled to proceed, and the uncertainty which hangs round the issues of our best-arranged schemes, contribute much to the troubles and perplexities of life. Under the present dispensation we must calculate on probabilities; and our calculations, when made with the best care and forethought, are often proved faulty by the result. And if we could substitute certainty for probability, and thus define, with a thorough accuracy, the workings of any proposed plan, it is evident that we might be saved a vast amount both of anxiety and of disappointment. Much of our anxiety is now derived from the doubtfulness of the success of schemes, and from the likelihood of obstruction and mischance: much of our

disappointment from the overthrow and failure of long-cherished purposes. And, of course, if we possessed the same mastery of the future as of the past, we should enter upon nothing which was sure to turn out ill; but, regulating ourselves in every undertaking by fore-known results, avoid much of previous debate and of after regret.

Yet when we have admitted, that want of acquaintance with the future gives rise to much both of anxiety and of disappointment, we are prepared to argue, that the possession of this acquaintance would be incalculably more detrimental. It is quite true that there are forms and portions of trouble which might be warded off or escaped, if we could behold what is coming, and take measures accordingly. But it is to the full as true, that the main of what shall befall us is matter of irrevocable appointment, to be averted by no prudence, and dispersed by no bravery. And if we could know beforehand whatever is to happen, we should, in all probability, be unmanned and enervated; so that an arrest would be put on the businesses of life by previous ac-

quaintance with their several successes. The parent, who is pouring his attention on the education of a child, or laboring to procure for him advancement and independence, would be unable to go forward with his efforts, if certified that he must follow that child to the grave so soon as he had fitted him for society and occupation. And even if the map were a bright one, so that we looked on sunny things as fixed for our portion, familiarity with the prospect would deteriorate it to our imagination; and blessings would seem to us of less and less worth, as they came on us more and more as matters of course. In real truth, it is our ignorance of what shall happen which stimulates exertion: we are so constituted that to deprive us of hope would be to make us inactive and wretched. And, therefore, do we hold that one great proof of God's loving-kindness towards us, may be fetched from that impenetrable concealment in which he wraps up to-morrow. We long indeed to bring to-morrow into to-day, and strain the eye in the fruitless endeavor to scan its occurrences. But it is, in a great degree, my ignorance of to-morrow which makes me vigilant, and energetic, and pains-taking, to-day. And if I could see to-day that a great calamity or a great success would undoubtedly befall me to-morrow, the likelihood is that I should be so overcome, either by sorrow or by delight, as to be unfitted for those duties with which the present hour is charged.

Now it were easy to employ ourselves in examining, more in detail, the bearings on our temporal well-being of that hiding of the future to which we have adverted. Neither would such examination be out of place in a discourse on the words of our text. The prophet refers chiefly to temporal deliverance, when mentioning "the salvation of the Lord." Judah had gone into captivity: and Jerusalem, heretofore a queen amongst the cities, sat widowed and desolate. Yet Jeremiah was persuaded that the Lord would "not cast off for ever;" Lam. 3: 31; and he, therefore, encouraged the remnant of his countrymen to expect a better and brighter season. He does not, indeed, predict immediate restoration. But then he asserts that delayed mer-

cy would be more advantageous than instant, and that profit might be derived from expectation as well as from possession. If we paraphrase his words, we may consider him saying to the stricken and disconsolate Jews, you wish an immediate interference of God on behalf of your city and nation. You desire, that, without a moment's delay, the captive tribes should march back from Babylon, and Jerusalem rise again in her beauty and her strength. But if this wish were complied with, it would be at the expense of much of the benefit derivable from affliction: for "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

Thus the original design of the passage would warrant our taking a large sweep in its explanation, and leading you over that range of inquiry which is opened by our introductory remarks. We might dilate on the advantageousness of the existing arrangement, and its wondrous adaptation to our moral constitution. We might show you, by references to the engagements and intercourses of life, that it is for our profit that we be uncertain as to issues, and, therefore, required both to hope and to wait. We doubt whether you could imagine a finer discipline for the human mind, than results from the fixed impossibility of our grasping two moments at once. The chief opponent to that feeling of independence which man naturally cherishes, but always to his own hurt, is his utter ignorance of the events of the next minute. For who can boast, or who can feel himself, independent, whilst unable to insure another beat of the pulse, or to decide whether, before he can count two, he shall be spoiled of life or reduced to beggary? It is only in proportion as men close their eyes to their absolute want of mastership over the future, that they encourage themselves in the delusion of independence. If they owned, and felt themselves, the possessors of a single moment, with no more power to secure the following than if the proposed period were a thousand centuries, we might set it down as an unavoidable consequence, that they would shun the presumption of so acting for themselves as though God were exclu-

ded from superintending their affairs. And if there were introduced an opposite arrangement; if men were no longer placed under a system compelling them to hope and to wait; you may all see that the acquired power over the future would produce, in many quarters, an infidel contempt, or denial, of Providence: so that, by admitting men to a closer inspection of his workings, God would throw them further off from acquaintance with himself and reverence of his majesties. Thus the goodness of the existing arrangement is matter of easy demonstration, when that arrangement is considered as including the affairs of everyday life. If you look at the consummation as ordinarily far removed from the formation of a purpose, there is, we again say, a fine moral discipline in the intervening suspense. That men may withstand, or overlook, the discipline, and so miss its advantages, tells nothing against either its existence, or its excellence. And the necessity which is laid on the husbandman, that, after sowing the seed, he wait long for the harvest-time, in hope, but not certainty; and upon the merchantman, that, after dispatching his ships, he wait long for the products of commerce, hoping, but far enough from sure, that the voyage and the traffic will be prosperous; this necessity, we say, for hoping and waiting reads the best of all lessons as to actual dependence on an invisible being; and thus verifies our position, that, whatever the desired advantage, "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for" its possession. Ay, and we are well convinced that there cannot be found a nobler argument for the existence of a stanch moral government over the creatures of our race, than results from this imposed necessity that there elapse a period, and that too a period full of uncertainties, between the forming and completing a design. Amid all the mutiny and uproar of our present torn and disorganized condition, there is a voice, in our utter powerlessness to make sure of the future, which continually recalls man from his rebellion and scepticism; and which, proclaiming, in accents not to be overborne by the fiercest tempest of passion, that he holds every thing at the will of another,

shall demand irresistibly his condemnation at any oncoming trial, if he carry it with a high and independent hand against the being thus proved the uncontrolled lord of his destinies.

But we feel it necessary to bring our inquiry within narrower limits, and to take the expression, "the salvation of the Lord," in that more restrained sense which it bears ordinarily in Scripture. We shall employ, therefore, the remainder of our time in endeavoring to prove to you, by the simplest reasoning, that it is for our advantage as christians that salvation, in place of being a thing of certainty and present possession, must be hoped and quietly waited for by believers.

Now whilst it is the business of a christian minister to guard you against presumption, and an uncalculating confidence that you are safe for eternity, it is also his duty to rouse you to a sense of your privileges, and to press on you the importance of ascertaining your title to immortality. We think it not necessarily a proof of christian humility, that you should be always in doubt of your spiritual state, and so live uncertain whether, in the event of death, you would pass into glory. We are bound to declare that Scripture makes the marks of true religion clear and decisive; and that, if we will but apply, faithfully and fearlessly, the several criteria furnished by its statements, it cannot remain a problem, which the last judgment only can solve, whether it be the broad way, or the narrow, in which we now walk. But, nevertheless, the best assurance to which a christian can attain must leave salvation a thing chiefly of hope. We find it expressly declared by St. Paul to the Romans, "we are saved by hope." Rom. 8:24. And they who are most persuaded, and that too by scriptural warrant, that they are in a state of salvation, can never declare themselves, except in the most limited sense, in its fruition or enjoyment; but must always live mainly upon hope, though with occasional foretastes of coming delights. They can reach the conclusion—and a comforting and noble conclusion it is—that they are justified beings, as having been enabled to act faith on a Mediator. But whilst justification insures them salvation, it puts



them not into its present possession. It is thus again that St. Paul distinguishes between justification and salvation, saying of Christ, "being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Rom. 5 : 9. So that the knowing ourselves justified is the highest thing attainable on earth; salvation itself, though certain to be reached, remaining an object for which we must hope, and for which we must wait.

Now it is the goodness of this arrangement which is asserted in our text. We can readily suppose an opposite arrangement. We can imagine that, as soon as a man were justified, he might be translated to blessedness, and that thus the gaining the title, and the entering on possession, might be always contemporary. Since the being justified is the being accepted in God's sight, and counted perfectly righteous, there would seem no insurmountable reason why the justified man should be left, a single moment, a wanderer in the desert; or why the instant of the exertion of saving faith, inasmuch as that exertion makes sure the salvation, should not also be the instant of entrance into glory. To question the possibility of such an arrangement, would be to question the possibility of an out-putting of faith at the last moment of life; for, unless what is called death-bed repentance be distinctly an impossible thing, the case is clearly supposable of the justifying act being immediately followed by admission into heaven.

But the possibility of the arrangement, and its goodness, are quite different questions; and whilst we see that it might have been ordered, that the justified man should at once be translated, we can still believe it good that he "both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Our text speaks chiefly of the goodness to the individual himself; but it will be lawful first to consider the arrangement as fraught with advantage to human society.

We must all perceive, that, if true believers were withdrawn from earth at the instant of their becoming such, the influences of piety, which now make themselves felt through the mass of a population, would be altogether

destroyed, and the world be deprived of that salt which alone preserves it from total decomposition. We believe that when Christ declared of his followers, "ye are the salt of the earth," Matthew, 5 : 13, he delivered a saying which described, with singular fidelity, the power of righteousness to stay and correct the disorganizations of mankind. As applied to the apostles the definition was especially accurate. There lay before them a world distinguished by nothing so much as by corruption of doctrine and manners. Though philosophy was at its height; though reason had achieved her proudest triumphs; though arts were in their maturity; though eloquence was then most finished, and poetry most harmonious; there reigned over the whole face of the globe a tremendous ignorance of God: and if humanity were not actually an unsound and putrid mass, it had in it every element of decay, so that, if longer abandoned to itself, it must have fallen into incurable disease, and become covered with the livid spots of total dissolution. And when, by divine commission, the disciples penetrated the recesses of this mass, carrying with them principles, and truths, exactly calculated to stay the moral ruin which was spreading with fearful rapidity—when they went forth, the bearers of celestial communications which taught the soul to feel herself immortal, and, therefore, indestructible; which lifted even the body out of the grasp of decay, teaching that bone, and sinew, and flesh should be made at last gloriously incorruptible—when, we say, the disciples thus applied to the world a remedy, perfect in every respect, against those tendencies to corruption which threatened to turn our globe into the Lazar-house of creation; were they not to be regarded as the purifiers and preservers of men, and could any title be more just than one which defined them, in their strivings to overspread a diseased world with healthfulness, as literally "the salt of the earth?"

But it holds good in every age that true believers are "the salt of the earth." Whilst the contempt and hatred of the wicked follow incessantly the professors of godliness, and the enemies of Christ, if ability were com-

mensurate with malice, would sweep from the globe all knowledge of the Gospel, we can venture to assert that the unrighteous owe the righteous a debt of obligation not to be reckoned up; and that it is mainly because the required ten are still found in the cities of the plain that the fire-showers are suspended, and time given for the warding off by repentance the doom. And over and above this conservative virtue of godliness, it is undeniable that the presence of a pious man in a neighborhood will tell greatly on its character; and that, in variety of instances, his withdrawal would be followed by wilder outbreakings of profligacy. It must have fallen, we think, within the power of many of you to observe, how a dissolute parish has undergone a species of moral renovation, through the introduction within its circles of a God-fearing individual. He may be despised; he may be scorned; he may be railed at. The old may call him methodist, and the young make him their laughing-stock. But, nevertheless, if he live consistently, if he give the adversary no occasion to blaspheme, he will often, by his very example, go a long way towards stopping the contagion of vice: he will act, that is, as the salt: and if he succeed not—for this is beyond the power of the salt—in restoring to a wholesome texture what is fatally tainted, he will be instrumental to the preserving much which would otherwise have soon yielded to the destructive malaria. It is not merely that his temporal circumstances may have given him ascendancy over his fellows. There is in the human mind—we dare not say, a bias towards virtue, but—an abiding, and scarcely to be overborne consciousness, that such ought to be the bias, and that, whensoever the practical leaning is to vice, there is irresistible evidence of moral derangement. Whatever the extent of human degeneracy, you will not find that right and wrong have so changed places, that, in being the slaves of vice, men reckon themselves the subjects of virtue. There is a gnawing restlessness in those who have most abandoned themselves to the power of evil; and much of the fierceness of their profligacy is ascribable to a felt necessity of keeping down,

and stifling, reproachful convictions. And hence it comes to pass that vice will ordinarily feel rebuked and overawed by virtue, and that the men, whom you would think dead to all noble principle, will be disturbed by the presence of an upright and God-fearing character. The voice of righteousness will find something of an echo amid the disorder and confusion of the worst moral chaos; and the strings of conscience are scarcely ever so dislocated and torn as not to yield even a whisper, when swept by the hand of a high-virtued monitor. So that the godly in a neighborhood wield an influence which is purely that of godliness; and when denied opportunities of direct interference, check by example, and reprove by conduct. You could not then measure to us the consequences of the withdrawal of the salt from the mass of a population; nor calculate the rapidity with which, on the complete removal of God-fearing men, an overwhelming corruption would pervade all society. But this is exactly what must occur, if a system, opposite to the present, were introduced, so that salvation were not a thing to be hoped and waited for. If as soon as a man were justified, through being enabled to act faith upon Christ, he were translated to the repose and blessedness of heaven, he could exert nothing of that influence, and work nothing of that benefit, which we have now traced and exhibited. And, therefore, in proportion as the influence is important and the benefit considerable, we must be warranted in maintaining it "good, that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

It is, however, the goodness of the arrangement to the individual himself which seems chiefly contemplated by the prophet, and upon this, therefore, we shall employ the remainder of our discourse. Now, under this point of view, our text is simpler at first sight than when rigidly examined. We can see, at once, that there is a spiritual discipline in the hoping and waiting, which can scarcely fail to improve greatly the character of the christian. But, nevertheless, would it not, on the whole, be vastly for his personal advantage that he should leave speedily this theatre of conflict and trouble, and



be admitted, without a wearisome delay, into the mansion which Christ has prepared for his residence? We have already shown you that there can exist no actual necessity, that he who is justified should not be immediately glorified. We are bound to believe that a justified man—and, beyond all question, a man is justified in this life—is consigned to blessedness by an irreversible appointment, and that, consequently, whensoever he dies, it is certain that he enters into heaven. The moment he is justified, heaven becomes undoubtedly his portion; and if, therefore, he die at the instant of justification, he will as surely obtain immortality, as if many years elapse between the putting of faith and the departure from life. And how then can it be good for him, certified as he thus is of heaven, to continue the war with sin and corruption, and to cut painfully his way through hosts of opponents, in place of passing instantaneously into the joy of his Lord? If you could prove it in every case indispensable that a justified man should undergo discipline in order to his acquiring meetness for heaven, there would be no room for debate as to the goodness asserted in our text. But you cannot prove the discipline indispensable, because we know the possibility that a man may be justified at the last moment of life; so that, no time having been allowed for preparation, he may spring from a death-bed to a throne. And thus the question comes back upon us in its unbroken force, wherein lies the goodness of hoping and waiting for salvation?

We take the case, for example, of a man who, at the age of thirty, is enabled, through the operations of grace, to look in faith to the Mediator. By this looking in faith the man is justified: a justified man cannot perish: and if, therefore, the individual died at thirty, he would "sleep in Jesus." But, after being justified, the man is left thirty years upon earth—years of care, and toil, and striving with sin—and during these years he hopes and waits for salvation. At length he obtains salvation; and thus, at the close of thirty years, takes possession of an inheritance to which his title was clear at the beginning. Now wherein can lie the

advantageousness of this arrangement? Thirty years, which might have been spent in the enjoying, are spent in the hoping and waiting for salvation: and unless the reality shall fall short of the expectation, how can it be true that "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord?"

We think that no fair explanation can be given of our text, unless you bring into the account the difference in the portions to be assigned hereafter to the righteous. If you supposed uniformity in the glory and happiness of the future, we should be at a loss to discover the goodness of the existing arrangement. If, after the thirty years of warfare and toil, the man receive precisely what he might have received at the outset of these years, is he benefited, nay, is he not injured by the delay? If the delay afford the means of increasing the blessedness, there is a clear advantageousness in that delay. But if the blessedness be of a fixed quantity, so that at the instant of justification a man's portion is unalterably determined, to assert it good that he should hope and wait, is to assert that thirty years of expectation are more delightful than thirty years of possession.

We bring before you, therefore, as a comment on our text, words such as these of the apostle, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4: 17. We consider that when you set the passages in juxta-position, the working-power, ascribed by one to affliction, gives satisfactory account of the goodness attributed by the other to the hoping and waiting. It is unquestionably good that a man should hope and wait, provided the delay make it possible that he heighten the amount of finally-received blessedness. And if the affliction, for example, which is undergone during the period of delay, work out "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," it follows necessarily, that delay makes possible the heightening future glory; and therefore it follows, just as necessarily, that it is "good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

We consider it easy, by thus bring-



ing into the account an undoubted doctrine of Scripture—the doctrine that the future allotments of the righteous shall be accurately proportioned to their present attainments—to explain the goodness of an arrangement which defers, through many years, full deliverance from trial. We are here, in every sense, on a stage of probation; so that, having once been brought back from the alienations of nature, we are candidates for a prize, and wrestlers for a diadem. It is not the mere entrance into the kingdom for which we contend: the first instant in which we act faith on Christ as our propitiation, sees this entrance secured to us as justified beings. But, when justified, there is opened before us the widest field for a righteous ambition; and portions deepening in majesty, and heightening in brilliancy, rise on our vision, and animate to unwearied endeavor. We count it one of the glorious things of christianity, that, in place of repressing, it gives full scope to all the ardor of man's spirit. It is common to reckon ambition amongst vices: and a vice it is, under its ordinary developments, with which christianity wages interminable warfare. But, nevertheless, it is a stanch, and an adventurous, and an eagle-eyed thing: and it is impossible to gaze on the man of ambition, daunted not by disaster, wearied not by repulse, disheartened not by delay, holding on in one unbroken career of effort to reach a coveted object, without feeling that he possesses the elements of a noble constitution; and that, however to be wept over for the prostitution of his energies, for the pouring out this mightiness of soul on the corrupt and the perishable, he is equipped with an apparatus of powers which need nothing but the being rightly directed, in order to the forming the very finest of characters. And we think it nothing better than a libel on christianity, to declare of the ambitious man, that, if he become religious, he must, in every sense, cease to be ambitious. If it have been his ambition to rise high in the dignities of a state, to win to himself the plaudits of a multitude, to twine his forehead with the wreaths of popular favor, to be foremost amongst the heroes of war or the professors of science—the introduced humility of a dis-

ciple of Christ, bringing him down from all the heights of carnal ascendancy, will be quite incompatible with this his ambition, so that his discipleship may be tested by its suppression and destruction. But all those elements of character which went to the making up this ambition—the irrepressible desire of some imagined good, the fixedness of purpose, the strenuousness of exertion—these remain, and are not to be annihilated; requiring only the proposition of a holy object, and they will instantly be concentrated into a holy ambition. And christianity propounds this object. Christianity deals with ambition as a passion to be abhorred and denounced, whilst urging the warrior to carve his way to a throne, or the courtier to press on in the path of preferment. But it does not cast out the elements of the passion. Why should it? They are the noblest which enter into the human composition, bearing most vividly the impress of man's original formation. Christianity seizes on these elements. She tells her subjects that the rewards of eternity, though all purchased by Christ, and none merited by man, shall be rigidly proportioned to their works. She tells them that there are places of dignity, and stations of eminence, and crowns with more jewelry, and sceptres with more sway, in that glorious empire which shall finally be set up by the Mediator. And she bids them strive for the loftier recompense. She would not have them contented with the lesser portion, though infinitely outdoing human imagination as well as human desert. And if ambition be the walking with the stanch step, and the single eye, and the untired zeal, and all in pursuit of some longed-for superiority, christianity saith not to the man of ambition, lay aside thine ambition: christianity hath need of the stanch step, and the single eye, and the untired zeal; and she, therefore, sets before the man pyramid rising above pyramid in glory, throne above throne, palace above palace; and she sends him forth into the moral arena to wrestle for the loftiest, though unworthy of the lowest.

We shall not hesitate to argue that in this, as in other modes which might be indicated, christianity provides an antagonist to that listlessness which a

feeling of security might be supposed to engender. She does not allow the believer to imagine every thing done, when a title to the kingdom has been obtained. She still shows him that the trials of the last great assize shall proceed most accurately on the evidence of works. There is no swerving in the Bible from this representation. And if one man becomes a ruler over ten cities, and another over five, and another over two—each receiving in exact proportion to his improvement of talents—it is clear as demonstration can make it, that our strivings will have a vast influence on our recompense, and that, though no iota of blessedness shall be portioned out to the righteous which is not altogether an undeserved gift, the arrangements of the judgment will balance most nicely what is bestowed and what is performed. It shall not be said, that, because secure of admission into heaven, the justified man has nothing to excite him to toil. He is to wrestle for a place amongst spirits of chief renown: he is to propose to himself a station close to the throne: he is to fix his eye on a reward sparkling above the rest with the splendors of eternity: and, whilst bowed to the dust under a sense of utter unworthiness to enter the lists in so noble a contest, he is to become competitor for the richest and most radiant of prizes. We tell him, then, that it is good that he hope and wait. It is telling him there is yet time, though rapidly diminishing, for securing high rank in the kingdom. It is telling the wrestler, the glass is running out, and there is a garland not won. It is telling the warrior, the night shades are gathering, and the victory is not yet complete. It is telling the traveller, the sun is declining, and there are higher peaks to be scaled. Is it not good that I hope and wait, when each moment may add a jewel to the crown, a plume to the wing, a city to the sceptre? Is it not good, when each second of effort may lift me a step higher in the scale of triumph and majesty? Oh, you look on an individual whose faith in Christ Jesus has been demonstrated by most scriptural evidence, but unto whom life is one long series of trials, and disasters, and pains; and you are disposed to ask, seeing there can rest no doubt on the man's title to salvation,

whether it would not be good for him to be freed at once from the burden of the flesh, and thus spared, it may be, yet many years of anxiety and struggle. You think that he may well take as his own the words of the Psalmist: "Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest." But we meet you with the assertion of an instituted connection between our two states of being. We tell you that the believer, as he breasts the storm, and plunges into the war, and grapples with affliction, is simply in the condition of one who contends for a prize; ay, and that if he were taken off from the scene of combat, just at the instant of challenging the adversary, and thus saved, on your short-sighted calculation, a superfluous outlay of toil and resistance, he would miss noble things, and things of loveliness, in his everlasting portion, and be brought down from some starry eminence in the sovereignties of eternity, which, had he fought through a long life-time "the good fight of faith," 1 Tim. 6: 12, might have been awarded him in the morning of the first resurrection.

Now we may suppose that we carry with us your admission of the fairness of the reasoning, that, inasmuch as the continuance of the justified upon earth affords them opportunity of rising higher in the scale of future blessedness, there is a goodness in the arrangement which is vastly more than a counterpoise to all the evils with which it seems charged. The justified man, translated at the instant of justification, could receive nothing, we may think, but the lower and less splendid portions. He would have had no time for glorifying God in the active duties of a christian profession; and it would seem impossible, therefore, that he should win any of those more magnificent allotments which shall be given to the foremost of Christ's followers. But the remaining in the flesh after justification, allows of that growth in grace, that progress in holiness, that adorning in all things the doctrine of the Savior, to which shall be awarded, at the judgment, chief places in the kingdom of Messiah. And if, on the supposition that no period intervene, there can be no augmentations of happiness, whereas, on that of hoping and wait-



ing, there may be daily advances in holiness, and therefore daily accessions to a never-ending bliss; who will deny the accuracy of the inference, that "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord?"

There would seem nothing wanting to the completeness of this argument, unless it be proof of what has been all along assumed, namely, that the being compelled to hope and to wait is a good moral discipline; so that the exercises prescribed are calculated to promote holiness, and, therefore, to insure happiness. We have perhaps only shown the advantageousness of delay; whereas the text asserts the advantageousness of certain acts of the soul. Yet this discrepancy between the thing proved, and the thing to be proved, is too slight to require a lengthened correction. It is the delay which makes salvation a thing of hope; and that which I am obliged to hope for, I am, of course, obliged to wait for; and thus, whatever of beneficial result can be ascribed to the delay may, with equal fitness, be ascribed to the hoping and waiting. Besides, hope and patience—for it is not the mere waiting which is asserted to be good; it is the quietly waiting; and this quiet waiting is but another term for patience—hope and patience are two of the most admirable of christian graces, and he who cultivates them assiduously cannot well be neglectful of the rest. So that, to say of a man that he is exercising hope and patience, is to say of him, that, through the assistance of God's Spirit, he is more and more overcoming the ruggedness and oppositions of nature, and more and more improving the soil, that lovely things, and things of good report, may spring up and flourish. In the material world, there is a wonderful provision against the destruction of the soil, which has often excited the admiration of philosophers. The coat of vegetable mould with which this globe is overspread, and the removal of which would be the covering of our fields with sterility, consists of loose materials, easily washed away by the rains, and continually carried down by the rivers to the sea. And, nevertheless, though there is this rapid and ongoing waste, a waste which seems sufficient, of it-

self, to destroy in a few years the soil, there is no sensible diminution in the layers of mould; but the soil remains the same, or nearly the same, in quantity; and must have done so, ever since this earth became the home of animal or vegetable life. And we know, therefore, that there must be causes at work which continually furnish a supply just equal to the waste of the soil. We know that God, wonderful in his forethought and contrivance, must have arranged a system of mechanical and chemical agencies, through whose operations the ravages of the flood and storm should be carefully repaired: and we find accordingly, that, whilst the soil is swept away, there goes on continually, through the action of the elements, a breaking up and pounding even of the hardest rocks, and that thus there is strewed upon the earth's surface by the winds, or brought down in the sediments of mountain torrents, a fresh deposit in the room of the displaced and far-scattered covering.

Now it is only necessary to allude to such an arrangement in the material world, and you summon forth the admiration and applause of contemplative minds. It is a thing so surprising, that the waste and loss, which the most careless must observe, should be continually and exactly repaired, though by agencies whose workings we can scarcely detect, that the bare mention of the fact elicits, on all sides, a confession, that creative wisdom and might distance immeasurably the stanchest of our searchings. But we think that, in the spiritual economy, we have something, analogous indeed, but still more beautiful as an arrangement. The winds of passion, and the floods of temptation, pass fiercely over the soil of the heart, displacing often and scattering that mould which has been broken up by the ploughshare of the Gospel. But God's promise is, that he will not suffer believers "to be tempted above that they are able;" 1 Cor. 10 : 13; and thus, though the soil for a while be disturbed, it is not, as in the material system, carried altogether away, but soon resettles, and is again fit for the husbandman. But this is not all. Every overcome temptation, ministering, as it must do, to faith, and hope, and patience, is virtually an assault on the

granite of a corrupt nature, and helps to break in pieces the rock of which there remains much in the breasts of the most pious. He who conquers a temptation takes a fresh step towards subduing himself; in other words, detaches more particles from the stone and the iron. And thus, in most accurate correspondence, as in the natural world so in the spiritual, the tempest and torrent, which displace the soil, provide fresh material for all the purposes of vegetation: but there is this difference between the two: in the natural world, the old soil disappears, and its place is supplied by the new; in the spiritual, the old, disturbed for a while, subsides, and is then wonderfully deepened by accessions of new. Hope and patience, exercised by the appointed trials of life, cause an enrichment of the soil in which all christian graces flourish; so that the grain of mustard seed, bursting into a tree, finds ample space for its roots, spreading them wide and striking them deep. And if this be no exaggerated account of the benefits resulting from a sedulous exercise of hope and patience; if it be true that he who, in the scriptural sense, hopes and quietly waits for salvation, is under that discipline which, of all others, ministers to the growth of dispositions acceptable to God; we have omitted, it would seem, no step in the required demonstration, but have collected all the elements of proof, that "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

We would only further remark, though the statement is perhaps involved in the preceding, that the delay is good as affording time in which to glorify God. It is a spectacle which should stir all the anxieties and sympathies of a believer, that of a world which has been ransomed by blood-shedding, but which, nevertheless, is overspread with impiety and infidelity. The christian is the man of loyalty and uprightness, forced to dwell in the assemblings of traitors. With a heart that beats true to the king of the land, he must tarry amongst those who have thrown off allegiance. On all sides he must hear the plottings of treason, and behold the actings of rebellion. Can he fail to be wrought up to a longing, and effort, to arrest, in

some degree, the march of anarchy, and to bring beneath the sceptre of righteousness the revolted and ruined population? Can he be an indifferent and cold-hearted spectator of the despite done to God by every class of society; and shall there be no throbbing of spirit, and no yearning of soul, over thousands of his race, who, though redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, are preparing themselves a heritage of fire and shame? We do but reason from the most invariable and well-known principles of our nature, when we argue that, as a loyal and loving subject of Christ, the believer must glow with righteous indignation at the bold insults offered to his Lord, and long to bend every faculty and power to the diminishing the world's wretchedness by overcoming its rebellion. What stronger proof then can you ask of the goodness in question than that, whilst detained from glory, we may withstand impiety? It is yet a little while, and we shall be withdrawn from this scene of rebellion; and no further effort, so far as we ourselves are concerned, can be made towards advancing Christ's kingdom. Others may come after us, of warmer loyalty and more resolute zeal, and make better head against the tide of apostacy. But our own opportunities of vindicating Christ's honor, and extending the sway of his sceptre, will have altogether passed away; and the last glance which our spirits, in departing, cast upon this earth, may show us impiety careering with as dominant a footstep as ever, and send us into God's presence with a throb of self-reproach at the paucity and poverty of our resistances to the might of the evil one. We doubt not, that, whatever the joy and peace of a christian's deathbed, there will be always a feeling of regret that so little has been done, or rather so little attempted, for Christ. And if, whilst his firmament is glowing with the dawns of eternity, and the melody of angels is just stealing on his ear, and the walls of the bright city are bounding his horizon, one wish could detain him in the tabernacle of flesh; oh, it would not be the wish of tarrying with the weeping ones who are clustered at his bedside; and it would not be that of providing for children, of superintending their education, or of perfecting



some plan for their settlement in life—he knows that there is a Husband of the widow and a Father of the fatherless—and the only wish which could put a check on his spirit, as the plumes of its wing just feel the free air, is that he might toil a little longer for Christ, and do at least some fractions more of his work, ere ushered into the light of his presence. And if the sinking energies were suddenly recruited, so that the pulse of the expiring man beat again vigorously; it might at first seem painful to him to be snatched back from glory; but remembering, that, whilst vice is enthroned on the high places of the earth, and millions bow down to the stock and the stone, there is a mighty demand for all the strenuousness of the righteous, he would use returning strength in uttering the confession, it is good that I yet hope and wait for salvation.

Now in winding up this subject of discourse, we have only to remark that religion gives a character to hope of which otherwise it is altogether destitute. You will scarcely find the man, in all the ranges of our creation, whose bosom bounds not at the mention of hope. What is hope but the solace and stay of those whom it most cheats and deludes; whispering of health to the sick man, and of better days to the dejected; and the fairy name on which young imaginations pour forth all the poetry of their souls, and whose syllables float, like aerial music, into the ear of frozen and paralyzed old age? In the long catalogue of human griefs there is scarce one of so crushing a pressure that hope loses its elasticity, becoming unable to soar, and bring down fresh and fair leaves from some far-off domain which itself creates. And yet, whilst hope is the great inciter to exertion, and the great soother of wretchedness, who knows not that it ordinarily deceives mankind, and that, though it crowd the future with glorious resting-places, and thus tempt us to bear up a while against accumulated disasters, its palaces and gardens vanish as we approach; and we are kept from despair only because the pinnacles and forests of another bright scene fringe the horizon, and the deceiver finds us willing to be yet again deceived? Hope is a beautiful meteor: but, nevertheless, this meteor, like the

rainbow, is not only lovely because of its seven rich and radiant stripes; it is the memorial of a covenant between man and his Maker, telling us that we are born for immortality; destined, unless we sepulchre our greatness, to the highest honor and noblest happiness. Hope proves man deathless. It is the struggle of the soul, breaking loose from what is perishable, and attesting her eternity. And when the eye of the mind is turned upon Christ, "delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification," Romans, 4: 25, the unsubstantial and deceitful character is taken away from hope: hope is one of the prime pieces of that armor of proof in which the believer is arrayed; for St. Paul bids us take "for an helmet the hope of salvation." 1 Thess. 5: 8. It is not good that a man hope for wealth, since "riches profit not in the day of wrath;" Prov. 11: 4; and it is not good that he hope for human honors, since the mean and mighty go down to the same burial: but it is good that he hope for salvation; the meteor then gathers, like a golden halo, round his head, and, as he presses forward in the battle-time, no weapon of the evil one can pierce through that helmet.

It is good, then, that he hope: it is good also that he quietly wait. There is much promised in Scripture to the waiting upon God. Men wish an immediate answer to prayer, and think themselves forgotten unless the reply be instantaneous. It is a great mistake. The delay is often part, and the best part, of the answer. It exercises faith, and hope, and patience; and what better thing can be done for us than the strengthening those graces to whose growth shall be proportioned the splendors of our immortality? It is good, then, that ye wait. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isa. 40: 31. And ye must, according to the phrase of our text, wait for God. "The Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him." Isa. 30: 18. And if the time seem long, and, worn down with affliction and wearied with toil, ye feel impatient for the moment of full emancipation—remember ye—and let the remembrance check every murmur—that God leaves

you upon earth in order that, advancing in holiness, you may secure yourselves a higher grade amongst the children of the first resurrection. Strive ye, therefore, to "let patience have her perfect work." James, 1:4. It is "yet a little while, and he that shall come will come." Heb. 10:37. Be ye not disheartened; for "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." Rom. 13:12. As yet there has been no day to this creation, since rebellion wove the sackcloth into the overhead canopy. But the day comes onward. There is that edge of gold on the snow-mountains of a long-darkened world, which marks the ascending of the sun in his strength. "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, the morning cometh and also the night." Isa. 21:11, 12. Strange that morning and night should come hand in hand. But the morning to the righteous, as bringing salvation, shall be the night to the wicked, as bringing destruction. On then, still on, lest the morning break, ere hoping and waiting have wrought their intent. Who will sleep, when, as he slumbers, bright things glide by, which, if wakeful, he might have added to his portion? Who will put off the armor, when,

by stemming the battle-tide, he may gather, every instant, spoil and trophies for eternity? Who will tamper with carnal indulgences, when, for the poor enjoyment of a second, he must barter some everduring privilege? Wrestle, strive, fight, as men who "know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58. Ye cannot indeed merit advancement. What is called reward will be the reward of nothing but God's work within you, and, therefore, be a gift most royal and gratuitous. But whilst there is the strongest instituted connection between attainment here and enjoyment hereafter, we need not pause upon terms, but may summon you to holiness by the certainties of happiness. The Judge of mankind cometh, bringing with him rewards all wonderfully glorious; but, nevertheless, "one star differeth from another star in glory." 1 Cor. 15:41.

O God, it were an overwhelming mercy, and a magnificent portion, if we should obtain the least; but since thou dost invite, yea, command us to "strive for masteries," we will struggle—thy grace being our strength—for the higher and more beautiful.

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## SERMON XI.

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### TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS.

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"But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus."—Ephesians, 4:20 and 21st.

There is a singular verse in the Book of Ecclesiastes which appears directed against a common, though, perhaps, unsuspected error. "Say not thou what is the cause that the former days were

better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." Eccl. 7:10. We believe that there exists a disposition in persons, and especially in old persons, to set present years in



contrast with the past, and to prove, from the comparison, a great and on-going deterioration in the character of mankind. And it is quite certain, that, if this disposition were observable in Solomon's days, as well as in our own, it must pass ordinarily as the mark of a jaundiced and ill-judging mind. If it have been true in some ages, it cannot have been in all, that the moral aspect of the times has grown gradually darker. We must be warranted, therefore, in ascribing a disposition which has subsisted through days of improvement, as well as of declension, to a peevish determination to find fault, and not to a sober sitting in judgment upon matters of fact.

But the workings of the very same disposition may be traced under other and less obvious forms. We believe, for example, that men are often inclined to compare the religious advantages of the earlier and later days of christianity, and to uphold the superiority of the past to the present. It is imagined, that to have been numbered amongst the living when Jesus sojourned upon earth, to have been permitted to behold the miracles which he wrought, and to hear from his own lips the truths of redemption—it is imagined, we say, that there must have been in this a privilege ampler in dimensions than any which falls to men of later generations. And from such imagining there will spring often a kind of excusing, whether of infidelity, or of lukewarmness; our not believing at all, or our believing only languidly, being accounted for on the principle, that the evidence afforded is far less than might have been vouchsafed. Thus, under a specious, but more dangerous aspect, we are met again by the question, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these?"

Now we believe the question to be grounded altogether on mistake. If there be advantage on one side as contrasted with the other, we are persuaded that it lies with the present generation, and not with the past. It is true that the exhibition of miraculous energies, which was made in the cities of Judea, gave what ought to have been overwhelming attestation to the divinity of the mission of Jesus. If we possessed not the records of

history to assure us of the contrary, we might be disposed to conclude, with much appearance of fairness, that they who beheld diseases scattered, and death mastered, by a word, must have instantly followed Him who wrought out the marvels. Yet we may easily certify ourselves, that the Jew was occupied by prejudices which must have more than counterbalanced his peculiar advantages. He had before him, so to speak, a sketch of his Messiah, whose accuracy he never thought of questioning; and if a claimant of the Messiahship presented not the features which were foremost in this sketch, then, almost as a matter of course, his pretensions were rejected with scorn. It is nothing to say that ancient prophecy, more thoroughly investigated, might have taught the Jew the error of expecting, on the first advent of Messiah, a temporal prince and deliverer. The error was so ingrained into his spirit, that it was easier for him to refer miracles to the power of the evil one, than to suspect that he harbored a false expectation. So that, when we compare our own circumstances with those of the Jew, it behoves us to remember, that, if we have not his advantages in supernatural manifestations, neither have we his disadvantages in national prepossessions. We are not to argue the effect produced upon him, from that which might now be produced upon us, by the working of miracles. In his case every feeling which results from early association, or from the business of education, was enlisted against christianity; whereas it may almost be affirmed, that, in our case, every such feeling is on the side of christianity. If, therefore, we allow that the testimony, which we possess to the truth of our religion, wears not outwardly the same mightiness as that afforded in the days of the Savior, we should still contend that the predisposing circumstances in our own case far more than compensate the sensible witness in that of the Jew.

We may yet further observe, that not only are our disadvantages less, but, on a stricter examination, our advantages will appear greater. We may think there would have been a vast advantage in seeing Jesus work miracles; but, after all, we could only have be-

lieved that he actually worked them. And if we can once certify ourselves of this fact, we occupy, in the strictest sense, the same position as though we had been spectators of the wonder. It would be altogether childish to maintain, that I may not be just as certain of a thing which I have not seen, as of another which I have seen. Who is in any degree less confident, that there was once such a king as Henry the Eighth on the throne of these realms, than that there is now such a king as William the Fourth? Or is there one of us who thinks that he would have felt more sure of there having been such a king as Henry the Eighth, had he lived in the times of that monarch in place of the present? We hold then the supposition to be indefensible, that the spectator of a miracle has necessarily an advantage over those who only hear of that miracle. Let there be clear and unequivocal testimony to the fact of the miracle having been wrought, and the spectator and the hearer stand well nigh on a par. That there should be belief in the fact, is the highest result which can, in either case, be produced. But assuredly this result may as well be effected by the power of authenticated witness, as by the machinery of our senses. And, without question, the testimony to the truth of christianity is of so growing a character, and each age, as it rolls away, pays in so large a contribution to the evidences of faith, that it were easy to prove, that the men of the present generation gain, rather than lose, by distance from the first erection of the cross. It is saying but little, to affirm that we have as good grounds of persuasion that Jesus came from God, as we should have had, if permitted to behold the mighty workings of his power. We are bold to say that we have even better grounds. The testimony of our senses, however convincing for the moment, is of so fleeting and unsubstantial a character, that, a year or two after we had seen a miracle, we might be brought to question whether there had not been jugglery in the worker, or credulity in ourselves. If we found a nation up in arms, maintaining that there might have been magic or trickery, but that there had not been supernatural power; we might,

perchance, be easily borne down by the outcry, if the remembered witness of our eye-sight were all to which appeal could be made. It is not difficult to begin to suspect ourselves in the wrong, when we find no one willing to allow us in the right. And we therefore maintain, that, living as we do in a day when generation after generation has sat in assize on christianity, and registered a verdict that it has God for its author, we possess the very largest advantages over those who saw with their own eyes what Jesus did, and heard with their own ears what Jesus said.

Now you may not all readily perceive the connection of these remarks with the passage of Scripture on which we purpose to meditate. Yet the connection is of the strictest. The apostle addresses himself to converts, who, like ourselves, had not been privileged to behold the Savior of mankind. Christ Jesus had not walked the streets of Ephesus: and if it be supposable that certain of the inhabitants of that idolatrous city had visited Judea during the period of his sojourning on earth, it is incredible that the Ephesian church, as a body, had enjoyed with Him personal communion. Does then St. Paul address the Ephesians as though disadvantaged by this circumstance? Does he represent them as less favored than their brethren of Jerusalem who had lived within the circles of Christ's ministrations? On the contrary, you would judge, from the style of his address, that he wrote this Epistle to Jewish, and not to heathen converts. He speaks to the Ephesians of their having heard Christ, and of their having been taught by Christ. "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him." And what shall we gather from this, but a rigid confirmation of our foregoing remarks; a strengthening of the opinion, that those who have not seen may stand in precisely the same position as those who have; and that, consequently, the absence of what may be called sensible proof furnishes no groundwork of complaint, that "the former days were better than these?"

We must, indeed, allow that the Ephesians were brought, more nearly than ourselves, into personal contact with Christ, because instructed by



teachers who had seen the Savior in the flesh. Yet as soon as testimony ceases to be the testimony of senses, and becomes that of witnesses, there is an identification of the circumstances of men of former times, and of latter. Whether the testimony be transmitted through one, or through many; whether we receive it from those who themselves saw the Savior, or from those who have taken the facts on the witness of others; there is the same distinction between such testimony, and that resulting from being actual spectators, or actual auditors; and it might, therefore, be said to us, as well as to the Ephesians, ye have heard Christ, and ye have been taught by Christ.

But the portion of our text on which we would fix mainly your attention is the description of truth as made known by revelation. The teaching whereof the Ephesians had been the subjects, and which, therefore, we are bound to consider imparted to ourselves, is expressly stated to be "as the truth is in Jesus." Now this is a singular definition of truth, and well worth your closest attention. We hold it unquestionable, that, long ere Christ came into the world, much of truth, yea, of solid and illustrious truth, had been detected by the unaided searchings of mankind. We should not think that any advantage were gained to the cause of revelation, if we succeeded in demonstrating, that, over the whole face of our planet, with the lonely exception of the narrow province of Judea, there had rested, previously to the birth of the Redeemer, a darkness altogether impenetrable. We are quite ready to allow, that, where the full blaze was not made visible, glimmerings and sparklings were caught; so that, if upon no point, connected with futurity, perfect information were obtained, upon many points a degree of intelligence were reached which should not be overlooked in our estimate of heathenism. We think it right to assert, under certain limitations, that man, whilst left to himself, dug fragments of truth from the mighty quarry; though we know that he possessed not the ability of fashioning completely the statue, nor even of combining into symmetry the detached portions brought up by his oft-renewed strivings. We do not,

therefore, suppose it implied in the expression of our text, that truth was unknown amongst men until, having been taught by the Redeemer, it might be designated "truth as it is in Jesus." On the contrary, we are persuaded that the Ephesians, however shut out from the advantages of previous revelations, possessed many elements of moral truth before Christ's apostles appeared in their city. Hence the definition of our text implies not, that, out of Jesus, there were no discoverable manifestations of truth; but rather, that truth, when seen in and through Jesus, assumes new and distinguishing features. And it is upon this fact we desire, on the present occasion, to turn the main of your attention. We admit that certain portions of Christ's teaching related to truths which were not then, for the first time, made known to mankind. Other portions either involved new disclosures, or brought facts into notice which had been strangely and fatally overlooked. But whether the truth were new or old, the circumstance of its being truth "as it is in Jesus," gave it an aspect, and a character, which it would never have assumed, if communicated through another channel than the Mediator. Such we hold to be the drift of the expression. It becomes, then, our business to endeavor to prove, that "truth, as it is in Jesus," puts on a clothing, or a coloring, derived from the Redeemer; so that if you separate truth from him who is "the way, the truth, and the life," John, 14 : 6, it shall seem practically a different thing from itself when connected with this glorious personage.

Now we shall take truth under two principal divisions, and compare it as "it is in Jesus" with what it is out of Jesus. We shall refer, first, to those truths which have to do with God's nature and character; secondly, to those which have to do with man's condition. There may be, indeed, many minor departments of moral truth. But we think that these two great divisions include most, if not all, of the lesser.

We turn then, first, to the truths which have to do with the nature and character of God. We begin with the lowest element of truth; namely, that there is a great first cause, through whose agency hath arisen the fair and

costly fabric of the visible universe. We have here a truth, which, under some shape or another, has been recognized and held in every age, and by every nation. Barbarism and civilization have had to do with peculiar forms and modifications of this truth. But neither the rude processes of the one, nor the attenuating of the other, have availed to produce its utter banishment from the earth. However various the tribes into which the human race hath been broken, the phenomenon has never existed of a nation of atheists. The voyagers who have passed over waters which had never been ploughed by the seaman, and lighted upon islands whose loneliness had shut them out from the knowledge and companionship of other districts of the globe, have found always, amid the savage and secluded inhabitants, the notion of some invisible being, great in his power, and awful in his vengeance. We cannot, therefore, in any sense maintain, that the truth of the existence of a God was undiscovered truth, so long as it was not "truth as it is in Jesus." Christ came not to teach what natural, or rather traditional, religion was capable of teaching; though he gave sanctions to its lessons, of which, heretofore, they had been altogether destitute. But take the truth of the existence of a God as it is out of Jesus, and then take that truth as it is in Jesus, and let us see whether, in the two cases, the same truth will not bear a very different aspect.

We know it to be said of Christ by St. Paul, that he was "the image of the invisible God." Colos. 1: 15. It seems to us that the sense, in which Christ is the image, is akin to that in which he is the word of the Almighty. What speech is to thought, that is the incarnate Son to the invisible Father. Thought is a viewless thing. It can traverse space, and run to and fro through creation, and pass instantaneously from one extreme of the scale of being to the other; and, all the while, there is no power in my fellow-men to discern the careerings of this mysterious agent. But speech is manifested thought. It is thought embodied; made sensible, and palpable, to those who could not apprehend it in its secret and silent expatiations. And precisely what speech thus effects in regard to thought,

the incarnate Son effected in regard to the invisible Father. The Son is the manifested Father, and, therefore, fitly termed "the Word:" the relation between the incarnate Son and the Father being accurately that between speech and thought; the one exhibiting and setting forth the other. It is in somewhat of a similar sense that Christ may be termed "the image of the invisible God." "God is a Spirit." John, 4: 24. Of this spirit the creation is every where full, and the loneliest and most secluded spot is occupied by its presence. Nevertheless, we can discern little of the universal goings forth of this Deity. There are works above us, and around us, which present tokens of his wisdom and supremacy. But these, after all, are only feeble manifestations of his more illustrious attributes. Nay, they leave those attributes well-nigh wholly unrevealed. I cannot learn God's holiness from the stars or the mountains. I cannot read his faithfulness in the ocean or the cataract. Even his wisdom, and power, and love, are but faintly portrayed in the torn and disjointed fragments of this fallen creation. And seeing, therefore, that Deity, invisible as to his essence, can become visible as to his attributes, only through some direct manifestation not found in his material workmanship, God sent his well-beloved Son to assume our flesh; and this Son, exhibiting in and through his humanity as much of his divine properties as creaturehood could admit, became unto mankind "the image of the invisible God." He did not, in strict matter-of-fact, reveal to mankind that there is a God. But he made known to them, most powerfully, and most abundantly, the nature and attributes of God. The beams of divinity, passing through his humanity as through a softening medium, shone upon the earth with a lustre sufficiently tempered to allow of their irradiating, without scorching and consuming. And they who gazed on this mysterious person, moving in his purity, and his benevolence, through the lines of a depraved and scornful population, saw not indeed God—"for no man hath seen God at any time," 1 John, 4: 12, and spirit must necessarily evade the searchings of sense—but they saw God imaged with the most thorough fidelity.



ty, and his every property embodied, so far as the immaterial can discover itself through the material.

Now we think you can scarcely fail to perceive, that if you detach the truth of the being of a God from Jesus, and if you then take this truth "as it is in Jesus," the difference in aspect is almost a difference in the truth itself. Apart from revelation, I can believe that there is a God. I look upon the wonder-workings by which I am encompassed; and I must sacrifice all that belongs to me as a rational creature, if I espouse the theory that chance has been parent to the splendid combinations. But what can be more vague, what more indefinite, than those notions of Deity which reason, at the best, is capable of forming? The evil which is mixed with good in the creation; the disordered appearances which seem to mark the absence of a supreme and vigilant government; the frequent triumph of wickedness, and the correspondent depression of virtue; these, and the like stern and undeniable mysteries, will perplex me in every attempt to master satisfactorily the Unity of Godhead. But let me regard Jesus as making known to me God, and straightway there succeeds a calm to my confused and unsettled imaginings. He tells me by his words, and shows me by his actions, that all things are at the disposal of one eternal and inscrutable Creator. Putting forth superhuman ability alike in the bestowment of what is good, and in the removal of what is evil, he furnishes me with the strictest demonstration that there are not two principles which can pretend to hold sway in the universe; but that God, a being without rival, and alone in his majesties, created whatsoever is good, and permitted whatsoever is evil.

Thus the truth, the foundation of truth, of the existence of a God, takes the strength, and the complexion, of health, only in the degree that it is truth "as it is in Jesus." Men labored and struggled hard to reach the doctrine of the unity of Godhead. But philosophy, with all the splendor of its discoveries, could never banish polytheism from the earth. It was reserved for christianity to establish a truth which, now, we are disposed to class amongst the elements of even natural

theology. And when you contrast the belief in the existence of Deity which obtained generally before the coming of Christ, with that established where-soever the Gospel gains footing as a communication from heaven; the one, a belief in many gods; the other, a belief in one God—the first, therefore, a belief from which reason herself now instinctively recoils; the second, a belief which carries on its front the dignity and beauty of a sublime moral fact—why, you will all quickly admit that the truth of the existence of God, as it is out of Jesus, differs, immeasurably, from that same truth, "as it is in Jesus;" and you will thus grant the accuracy of the proposition now under review, namely, that truth becomes, practically, new truth, and effective truth, by being truth "as it is in Jesus."

Now, so far as natural theology is concerned, we derive, ordinarily, the truth of the existence of God from the curious and mighty workmanship of the visible creation. We conclude that a great intelligent cause must have spread out this panorama of grandeur, and loveliness, and contrivance. But let us deal with the truth, that God built the worlds, just as with the other truth of there being a God. Let us take it out of Jesus, and then let us take it in Jesus.

It is a vast deal easier for the mind to push onward into what is to come, than backward into what is past. Let a thing exist, and we can, in a certain sense, master the thought of its existence being indefinitely continued. But if, in searching out the beginnings of its existence, we can find no period at which it was not, then presently the mind is confounded, and the idea is too vast for its most giant-like grapplings. This is exactly the case with regard to the Godhead. We are able, comparatively speaking, to take in the truth, that God shall never cease to be. But we have no capacity whatsoever for this other truth, that God hath always been. I could go back a thousand ages, or a million ages, ay, or a thousand millions of ages; and though the mind might be wearied with traversing so vast a district of time, yet if I then reached a point where pausing I might say, here Deity began, here Godhead first rose into being, the worn spirit would recruit itself, and feel that the

end compensated the toil of the journeying. But it is the being unable to assign any beginning; rather, it is the knowing that there never was beginning; this it is, we say, which hopelessly distances every finite intelligence; the most magnificent, but certainly, at the same time, the most overpowering truth, being that He, at whose word the universe commenced, knew never himself a moment of commencement.

Now the necessity under which we thus lie of ascribing beginning to God's works, but not to God himself, forces on us the contemplation of a period when no worlds had started into being; and space, in its infinite circuits, was full only of the Eternal One. And then comes the question, as to the design and purpose of Deity in peopling with systems the majestic solitude, and surrounding himself with various orders of creatures. We confess, in all its breadth, the truth that God made the worlds. But the mind passes instantly on to the inquiry, why, and wherefore did He make them?

And if you take the truth of the creation of the universe out of Jesus, there is nothing but vague answer to give to such inquiry. We may think that God's benevolence craved dependent objects over which it might pour its solitudes. We may imagine that there was such desire of companionship, even in Deity, that it pleased not the Creator to remain longer alone. But we must not forget, that, in assigning such reasons, we verge to the error of supposing a void in the happiness of God, the filling-up of which tasked the energies of his Almightyness. In answering a question, we are bound to take heed that we originate not others far more difficult of solution.

We take then the truth of the creation, "as it is in Jesus," and we will see whether it assume not very different features from those worn by it, as it is out of Jesus. We learn, from the testimony of St. Paul, that "all things were created by Christ, and for Christ." Col. 1: 16. We would fix attention to this latter fact, "all things were created for Christ." We gather from this fact that the gorgeous structure of materialism, spreading interminably above us and around us, is nothing more than an august temple, reared for consecra-

tion to the Mediator's glory. "All things were created for Christ." You ask me why God spangled the firmament with stars, and paved with worlds the expansions of an untravelled immensity, and poured forth the rich endowment of life on countless myriads of multiform creatures. And I tell you, that, if you debar me from acquaintance with "God manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. 3: 16, I may give you in reply some brilliant guess, or dazzling conjecture, but nothing that will commend itself to thoughtful and well-disciplined minds. But the instant that I am brought into contact with revelation, and can associate creation with Christ, as alike its author and object, I have an answer which is altogether free from the vagueness of speculation. I can tell you that the star twinkles not on the measureless expanse, and that the creatures move not on any one of those worlds whose number outruns our arithmetic, which hath not been created for the manifestation of Christ's glory, and the advancement of Christ's purposes. We may not be able to define, with accuracy, the sublime ends which shall yet be attained, when evil is expelled from this long-defiled section of the universe. We know only, that, though an infidel world is banishing Christ from its councils, and the ranks of the blasphemers are leaguings to sweep away his name, and the scoffers are insolently asking "where is the promise of his coming;" 2 Peter, 3: 4; he shall descend with the cloud and the hurricane as his heraldry, and, circled with the magnificent sternness of celestial battle, turn the theatre of his humiliation into the theatre of his triumphs. Then—when "the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. 12: 23, shall have entered into the raised and glorified bodies; and when the splendid and rejoicing multitude shall walk forth on the new earth, and be canopied with the new heavens—Christ shall emphatically "see of the travail of his soul;" Isa. 53: 11; and then, from every field of immensity, crowded with admiring spectators, shall there roll in the ecstatic acknowledgment, "worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb." But, without descending to particulars, we may assert it unequivocally proved by sundry declarations of the Bible,



that suns, and planets, and angels, and men, the material creation with its walls, and domes, and columns, and the immaterial with its train upon train of lofty spirits—all these constitute one vast apparatus for effecting a mighty enthronement of Jesus of Nazareth. And if you recur to the work of contrast in which we are engaged; if you compare the truth of creation as it is out of Jesus with that same truth as it is in Jesus; then, when you observe that, in the one case, the mind has nothing of a resting-place—that it can only wander over the fields which God hath strewed with his wonders, confounded by the lustre without divining the intention—whereas, in the other, each star, each system, each human, each celestial being, fills some place in a mechanism which is working out the noble result of the coronation of Christ as Lord of all; why, we feel that the assent of every one in this assembly must be won to the position, that old truth becomes wellnigh new truth by being truth "as it is in Jesus."

But we wish to set before you yet simpler illustrations of the matter which we are engaged in demonstrating. The point we have in hand is the showing that truths, which refer to God's character, must be viewed in connection with Jesus, in order to their being rightly understood, or justly appreciated. We have endeavored to substantiate this, so far as the nature and works of the Almighty are concerned. Let us turn, however, for a few moments, to his attributes, and we shall find our position greatly corroborated.

We take, for example, the justice of God. We might obtain, independently on the scheme of redemption, a definite and firm-built persuasion, that God is a just God, taking cognizance of the transgressions of his creatures. We do not, then, so refer to the sacrifice of Christ for proof of God's justice, as though no proof could be elsewhere obtained. The God of natural religion must be a God to whom sundry perfections are ascribed; and amongst such perfections justice will find, necessarily, a place. But we argue that the demonstration of theory will never commend itself to men's minds like the demonstration of practice. There might have come to us a revelation from hea-

ven, ushered in with incontrovertible witness; and this revelation might have stated, in language the boldest and most unqualified, that God's justice could overlook no iota of offence, and dispense with no tittle of punishment. But, had we been left without a vivid exhibition of the workings of this justice, we should perpetually have softened down the statements of the word, and argued that, in all probability, far more was said than ever would be done. We should have reasoned up from human enactments to divine; and, finding that the former are oftentimes far larger in the threatening than in the execution, have concluded that the latter might, at last, exhibit the like inequality.

Now if we would deliver the truth of God's justice from these misapprehensions, whether wilful or accidental, what process, we ask of you, lies at our disposal? It is quite useless to try abstract reasoning. The mind can evade it, and the heart has no concern with it. It will avail nothing to insist on the literal force of expressions. The whole mischief lies in the questioning the thorough putting into effect; in the doubting whether what is denounced shall be point by point inflicted. What then shall we do with this truth of God's justice? We reply, we must make it truth "as it is in Jesus." We send a man at once to the cross of Christ. We bid him gaze on the illustrious and mysterious victim, stooping beneath the amazing burden of human transgression. We ask him whether he think there was remission of penalty on behalf of Him, who, though clothed in humanity, was one with Deity; or that the vials of wrath were spoiled of any of their scalding drops, ere emptied on the surety of our alienated tribes? We ask him whether the agonies of the garden, and the terrors of the crucifixion, furnish not a sufficient and thrilling demonstration, that God's justice, when it takes in hand the execution of punishment, does the work thoroughly; so that no bolt is too ponderous to be driven into the soul, no offence too minute to be set down in the reckoning? And if, when the sword of justice awoke against the fellow of the Almighty, it returned not to the scabbard till bathed in the anguish of the

sufferer ; and if God's hatred of sin be so intense and overwhelming a thing, that, ere transgressors could be received into favor, the Eternal Son interposed and humbled himself so that angels drew back confounded, and endured vicariously such extremity of wretchedness that the earth reeled at the spectacle, and the heavens were darkened ; why, shall there, or can there, be harborage of the deceitful expectation, that if any one of us, the sons of the apostate, rush on the bosses of the buckler of the Lord, and make trial for himself of the justice of the Almighty, he shall not find that justice as strict in its works as it is stern in its words, prepared to deal out to him, unsparingly and unflinchingly, the fiery portion whose threatenings glare from the pages of Scripture ? So then we may count it legitimate to maintain, that the truth of God being a just God is appreciated truth, and effective truth, only in the degree that it is truth " as it is in Jesus : " and we add, consequently, new witness to the fact, that the definition of our text describes truth accurately under its influential and life-giving forms.

We may pursue much the same line of argument in reference to the truth of the love of God. We may confess, that he who looks not at this attribute through the person and work of the Mediator, may obtain ideas of it which shall, in certain respects, be correct. And yet, after all, it would be hard to prove satisfactorily, by natural theology, that " God is love. " John, 4 : 8. There may be a kind of poetical, or Arcadian divinity, drawn from the brightness of sunshine, and the rich enamel of flowers, and the deep dark blue of a sleeping lake. And, taking the glowing landscape as their page of theology, men may sketch to themselves God unlimited in his benevolence. But when the sunshine is succeeded by the darkness, and the flowers are withered, and the waters wrought into madness, can they find in the wrath and devastation that assurance of God's love which they derived, unhesitatingly, from the calm and the beauty ? The matter of fact we hold to be, that Natural Theology, at the best, is a system of uncertainties, a balancing of opposites. I should draw different conclu-

sions from the genial breathings of one day, and the desolating simoom of the next. And though when I had thrown me down on an alpine summit, and looked forth on the clusterings of the grand and the lovely, canopied with an azure that was full of glory ; a hope, that my Creator loved me, might have been gathered from scenery teeming with impresses of kindness, and apparently sending out from waving forests, and gushing fountains, and smiling villages, the anthem of an acknowledgment that God is infinitely beneficent ; yet if, on a sudden, there passed around me the rushings of the hurricane, and there came up from the valleys the shrieks of an affrighted peasantry, and the torrents went down in their strength, sweeping away the labor of man's hands, and the corn and the wood which had crowned the fields as a diadem ; oh, the confidence which had been given me by an exhibition which appeared eloquent of the benevolence of God-head, would yield to horror and trepidation, whilst the Eternal One seemed walking before me, the tempest his voice, and the lightning his glance, and a fierce devastation in his every footprint.

But even allowing the idea gained, that " God is love, " there is no propriety of the Creator concerning which it is easier to fall into mistake. We have no standard by which to estimate divine affections, unless one which we fashion out of the results of the workings of human. And we know well enough, that, amongst ourselves, an intense and overweening attachment is almost sure to blind man to the faults of its object, or to cause, at the least, that when the faults are discerned, due blame is withheld. So that, whilst we have not before us a distinct exhibition of God's love, we may fall naturally into the error of ascribing an effeminate tenderness to the Almighty, and reckon, exactly in proportion as we judge the love amazing, that it will never permit our being given over to torment. Hence, admitting it to be truth, yea, most glorious and blessed truth, that the creature is loved by the Creator, this truth must be viewed through a rectifying medium, which shall correct the distortions which a depraved nature produces.



Now we maintain again that this rectifying medium must be the person and work of the Savior. In other words, we must make the truth of God's love, truth "as it is in Jesus," and then, at one and the same time, we shall know how ample is the love, and be guarded against abusing it. When we observe that God loved us so well as to give his Son to death for us, we perceive that the immenseness of this love leaves imagination far behind in her least-fettered soarings. But when we also observe that love, so unheard of, could not advance straight to the rescue of its objects, but must wait, ere it could breathe words of forgiveness to the fallen, the outworkings of a task of ignominy and blood; there must vanish, at once, the idle expectancy of a tenderness not proof against the cry of despair, and we must learn (unless we wilfully close the mind against conviction) that the love of a holy, and righteous, and immutable Being is that amazing principle, which can stir the universe in our behalf during the season of grace, and yet, as soon as that season have terminated, resign us unhesitatingly to the ministry of vengeance. Thus, take the truth of God's love out of Jesus, and you will dress up a weak and womanish sympathy, which cannot permit the punishment of the disobedient. But, on the other hand, take this truth "as it is in Jesus," and you have the love immeasurable in its stature, but uncompromising in its penalties; eager to deliver the meanest who repents, yet nerved to abandon the thousands who die hardened; threatening, therefore, the obdurate in the very degree that it encourages the penitent: and when you thus contrast truth "as it is in Jesus," with truth as it is out of Jesus, you will more and more recognize the power and the worth of the expression, that the Ephesians had been taught "as the truth is in Jesus."

We might employ this kind of illustration in regard to other attributes of God. We might show you that correct and practical views of the truths of God's faithfulness, God's holiness, God's wisdom, are only to be derived from the work of redemption; and this would be showing you that truth must be truth "as it is in Jesus," if we

would acquaint ourselves with the character of God. But we waive the further prosecution of our first head of discourse, and ask attention to a few remarks which have to do with the second.

We divided truth into two great departments; truth which relates to the character of God, truth which relates to the condition of man. We proceed, therefore, to affirm, in reference to the condition of man, that truth, if rightly understood, or thoroughly influential, must be truth "as it is in Jesus." We find it admitted, for example, in most quarters, that man is a fallen being, with faculties weakened, if not wholly incapacitated for moral achievement. Yet this general admission is one of the most heartless, and unmeaning things in the world. It consists with the harboring pride and conceit. It tolerates many forms and actings of self-righteousness. And the matter-of-fact is, that man's moral disability is not to be described, and not understood theoretically. We want some bold, definite, and tangible measurements. But we shall find these only in the work of Christ Jesus. I learn the depth to which I have sunk, from the length of the chain let down to updraw me. I ascertain the mightiness of the ruin by examining the machinery of restoration. I gather that I must be, in the broadest sense, unable to effect deliverance for myself, from observing that none less than the Son of the Highest had strength enough to fight the battles of our race. Thus the truth of human apostacy, of human corruption, of human helplessness—how shall this be understood truth and effective? We answer, simply through being truth "as it is in Jesus." In the history of the Incarnation and Crucifixion we read, in characters not to be misinterpreted, the announcements, that man has destroyed himself, and that, whatever his original powers, he is now void of ability to turn unto God, and do things well-pleasing in his sight. You do not, indeed, alter these truths, if you destroy all knowledge of the Incarnation and Crucifixion. But you remove their massive and resistless exhibition, and leave us to our own vague and partial computations. We have nothing practical to which to appeal, no-

thing fixed by which always to estimate. Thus, in spite of a seeming recognition of truth, we shall be turned adrift on a wide sea of ignorance and self-sufficiency; and all because truth may be to us truth as it is in moral philosophy, truth as it is in well-arranged ethics, truth as it is in lucid and incontrovertible statements; and yet prove nothing but despised, and ill-understood, and powerless truth, as not being to us truth "as it is in Jesus."

We add that the law of God, which has been given for the regulation of our conduct, is a wonderful compendium of truth. There is not a single working of wickedness, though it be the lightest and most secret, which escapes the denuncements of this law; so that the statute-book proves itself truth by delineating, with an unvarying accuracy, the whole service of the father of lies. But who knows any thing of this truth, unless acquainted with the law as expounded and fulfilled by Christ? Christ in his discourses expanded every precept, and in his obedience exhibited every demand. He, therefore, who would know the truth which there is in the law, must know this truth "as it is in Jesus." He moreover, who would not be appalled by this truth, must view it "as it is in Jesus." Knowledge of the law would crush a man, if unaccompanied by the consciousness that Christ obeyed the law in his stead. So that truth "as it is in Jesus," this is knowledge, and this is comfort. And finally—for we must hurry over ground where there is much which might tempt us to linger—look at the context of the words under review, and you will find that truth "as it is in Jesus," differs from that truth as it is out of Jesus, in being a sanctifying thing. The Ephesians were "taught as the truth is in Jesus," to "put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Hence—and this after all is the grand distinction—truth, "as it is in Jesus," is a thing of the heart; whereas truth, as it is out of Jesus, is a thing of the head. Dear Brethren, ye cannot be too often told that without holiness "no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews, 12, : 14. If no vigorous process of sanctification be going on within, we are destitute of the organs by

which to read truth in the holy child Jesus. Or, rather, we are ignorant of the characters in which truth is graven on the Savior: and therefore, though we may read it in books and manuscripts, on the glorious scroll of the heavens, and in the beautiful tracery of forest and mountain, we can never peruse it as written in the person and work of God's only and well-beloved Son. The mortification of the flesh—the keeping under the body—the plucking out the offending right eye—the cutting off the offending right hand—these, so to speak, are the processes of tuition by which men are taught "as the truth is in Jesus." Sanctification conducts to knowledge, and then knowledge speeds the work of sanctification.

We beseech you, therefore, that ye strive, through God's grace, to give yourselves to the business of putting off the old man. Will ye affirm that ye believe there is a heaven, and yet act as though persuaded that it is not worth striving for? Believe, only believe, that a day of coronation is yet to break on this long-darkened globe, and the sinews will be strung, like those of the wrestlers of old, who saw the garlands in the judges hands, and locked themselves in an iron embrace. Strive—for the grasp of a destroyer is upon you, and if ye be not wrenched away, it will palsy you, and crush you. Strive—for the foe is on the right hand, on the left hand, before you, behind you; and ye must be trampled under foot, if ye struggle not, and strike not, as those who feel themselves bound in a death-grapple. Strive—there is a crown to be won—the mines of the earth have not furnished its metal, and the depths of the sea hide nothing so radiant as the jewels with which it is wreathed. Strive—for if ye gain not this crown—Alas! alas! ye must have the scorpions for ever round the forehead, and the circles of that flame which is fanned by the breath of the Almighty's displeasure.

Strive then, but strive in the strength of your risen Lord, and not in your own. Ye know not how soon that Lord may come. Whilst the sun walks his usual path on the firmament, and the grass is springing in our fields, and merchants are crowding the exchange, and politicians jostling for place, and the



voluptuous killing time, and the avaricious counting gold, "the sign of the Son of Man," Matthew, 24 : 30, shall be seen in the heavens, and the august throne of fire and of cloud be piled for judgment. Be ye then persuaded. If not persuaded, be ye alarmed. There is truth in Jesus which is terrible, as well

as truth which is soothing : terrible, for he shall be Judge as well as Savior ; and ye cannot face Him, ye cannot stand before Him, unless ye now give ear to His invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew, 11 : 28.

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## SERMON XII.

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### THE DIFFICULTIES OF SCRIPTURE.

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"In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."—2 Peter, 3 : 16.

The writings of St. Paul, occupying, as they do, a large portion of the New Testament, treat much of the sublimer and more difficult articles of Christianity. It is undeniable that there is a great deal made known to us by the Epistles, which could only imperfectly, if at all, be derived from the Gospels. We have the testimony of Christ himself that he had many things to say to his disciples, which, whilst he yet ministered on earth, they were not prepared to receive. Hence it was altogether to be expected that the New Testament would be, what we find it, a progressive book ; the communications of intelligence growing with the fuller opening out of the dispensation. The deep things of the sovereignty of God ; the mode of the justification of sinners, and its perfect consistence with all the attributes of the Creator ; the mysteries bound up in the rejection of the Jew and the calling of the Gentile ; these enter largely into the Epistles of St. Paul, though only faintly intimated by writers who precede him in the canon of Scripture. And it is a natural and unavoidable consequence on the greater abstruseness of the topics which are

handled, that the apostle's writings should present greater difficulties to the Biblical student. With the exception of the Book of Revelation, which, as dealing with the future, is necessarily hard to be interpreted, the Epistle to the Romans is probably that part of the New Testament which most demands the labors of the commentator. And though we select this epistle as pre-eminent in difficulties, we may say generally of the writings of St. Paul, that, whilst they present simple and beautiful truths which all may understand, they contain statements of doctrine, which, even after long study and prayer, will be but partially unfolded by the most gifted inquirers. With this admission of difficulty we must join the likelihood of misconception and misapplication. Where there is confessedly obscurity, we may naturally expect that wrong theories will be formed, and erroneous inferences deduced. If it be hard to determine the true meaning of a passage, it can scarcely fail that some false interpretation will be advanced, or espoused, by the partisans of theological systems. If a man have error to maintain, he will turn for support to

passages of Scripture, of which, the real sense being doubtful, a plausible may be advanced on the side of his falsehood. If, again, an individual wish to persuade himself to believe tenets which encourage him in presumption and unholiness, he may easily fasten on separate verses, which, taken by themselves, and without concern for the analogy of faith, seem to mark out privileges superseding the necessity of striving against sin. So that we can find no cause of surprise in the fact, that St. Peter should speak of the Epistles of St. Paul as wrested by the "unlearned and unstable" to their own destruction. He admits that in these Epistles "are some things hard to be understood." And we consider it, as we have just explained, a necessary consequence on the difficulties, that there should be perversions, whether wilful or unintentional, of the writings.

But you will observe, that, whilst St. Peter confesses both the difficulty and the attendant danger, he gives not the slightest intimation that the Epistles of St. Paul were unsuited to general perusal. The Roman Catholic, when supporting that tenet of his church which shuts up the Bible from the laity, will appeal confidently to this statement of St. Peter, arguing that the allowed difficulty, and the declared danger, give the Apostle's authority to the measure of exclusion. But certainly it were not easy to find a more strained and far-fetched defence. Had St. Peter intended to infer, that, because obscurity and abuse existed, there ought to be prohibition, it is altogether unaccountable that he did not lay down the inference. A fairer opportunity could never be presented for the announcement of such a rule as the Roman Catholic advocates. And the mere finding, that, when an inspired writer speaks of the dangers of perusal, he gives not even a hint which can be tortured into sanction of its prohibition, is, in itself, so overpowering a witness to the right of all men to read the Bible for themselves, that we wonder at the infatuation of those who can appeal to the passage as supporting a counter-opinion. You will observe that whilst St. Peter speaks only of the writings of St. Paul as presenting "things hard to be understood," he extends to

the whole Bible the wresting of the unlearned and unstable. So that, when there is wanting that chastened, and teachable, and prayerful disposition, which should always be brought to the study of Scripture, the plainest passages and the most obscure may be equally abused. After all, it is not so much the difficulty which makes the danger, as the temper in which the Bible is perused. And if St. Peter's statement prove any thing, it proves that selections from Holy Writ, such as the papist will allow, are to the full as fraught with peril as the un mutilated volume; and that, therefore, unless a man is to read all, he ought not to read a line. We cannot but admire the manner in which the apostle has expressed himself. If he had specified difficulties; if he had stated that it was upon such or such points that St. Paul's Epistles, or the Scriptures in general, were obscure; those who are disposed to give part, and to keep back part, might have had a ground for their decision, and a rule for their selection. But since we have nothing but a round assertion that all the Scriptures may be, and are, wrested by the unlearned and unstable, there is left us no right of determining what is fit for perusal and what is not fit; so that, in allowing a solitary verse to be read, we run the same risk as in allowing every chapter from the first to the last. Thus we hold it clear to every candid inquirer, that our text simply proves the necessity of a right temper to the profitable perusal of the Bible. It gives no such exclusive characteristic to the writings of St. Paul, as would warrant our pronouncing them peculiarly unsuited to the weak and illiterate. If it sanction the withdrawal of any part of the Bible, it imperatively demands the withdrawal of the whole. And forasmuch as it thus gives not the shadow of authority to the selection of one part and the omission of another; and forasmuch, moreover, as it contains not the remotest hint that danger is a reason for shutting up the Scriptures; we rather learn from the passage, that free as the air should be the Bible to the whole human population, than that a priesthood, sitting in assize on its contents, may dole out fragments of the word, or keep it, if they please, undividedly to themselves.



We are not, however, required, in addressing a protestant assembly, to expose, at any length, the falsehood of that doctrine of popery to which we have referred. We introduced its mention, simply because its advocates endeavor to uphold it by our text. They just give a new witness to the truth of the text. They show, that, like the rest of the Scriptures, this verse may be perverted. The very passage which declares that all Scripture may be wrested, has itself been wrested to the worst and most pernicious of purposes. So that, as if in verification of the statement of St. Peter, when that statement became part of the Bible, it was seized upon by the "unlearned and unstable," and wrenched from its original bearings.

But we desire, on the present occasion, to bring before you what we count important considerations, suggested by the announcement that there are difficulties in Scripture. We have the decision of an inspired writer, that in the volume of inspiration there "are some things hard to be understood." We lay great stress on the fact, that it is an inspired writer who gives this decision. The Bible attests the difficulties of the Bible. If we knew the Bible to be difficult, only as finding it difficult, we might be inclined to suppose it luminous to others, though obscure to ourselves. We should not so thoroughly understand that the difficulties, which one man meets with in the study of Scripture, are not simply produced by his intellectual inferiority to another—no, nor by his moral or spiritual inferiority—but are, in a great degree, inherent in the subject examined, so that no equipment of learning and prayer will altogether secure their removal. The assertion of our text may be called an unqualified assertion. The proof, that there are "things hard to be understood," does not lie in the fact, that these things are wrested by "the unlearned and unstable:" for then, by parity of reason, we should make St. Peter declare that all Scripture is "hard to be understood." The assertion is independent on what follows, and shows the existence of difficulties, whether or no they gave occasion to perversions of the Bible. And though

it is of the writings of St. Paul, and of these alone, that the assertion is made, we may infer naturally, from the remainder of the passage, that the apostle intended to imply that difficulties are scattered through the whole of the Scriptures, so that it is a general characteristic of the Bible, that there are in it "some things hard to be understood."

Now it is upon this characteristic—a characteristic, you observe, not imagined by ourselves, because often unable to bring out all the force of a passage, but fastened on the Scriptures by the Scriptures themselves—that we desire to turn your attention. We have before us a feature of revelation, drawn by revelation itself, and not sketched by human surmise or discovery. And it seems to us that this feature deserves our very closest examination, and that from such examination we may look to derive lessons of more than ordinary worth. We take into our hands the Bible, and receive it as a communication of God's will, made, in past ages, to his creatures. And we know that, occupying, as all men do, the same level of helplessness and destitution, so that the adventitious circumstances of rank and education bring with them no differences in moral position, it cannot be the design of the Almighty, that superior talent, or superior learning, should be essential to the obtaining due acquaintance with revelation. There can be no fairer expectation than that the Bible will be intelligible to every capacity, and that it will not, either in matter or manner, adapt itself to one class in preference to another. And when, with all this antecedent idea that revelation will condescend to the very meanest understanding, we find, as it were on the covers of the book, the description that there are in it "things hard to be understood," we may, at first, feel something of surprise that difficulty should occur where we had looked for simplicity. And undoubtedly, however fair the expectation just mentioned, the Bible is, in some senses, a harder book for the uneducated man than for the educated. So far as human instrumentality is concerned, the great mass of a population must be indebted to a few learned men for

any acquaintance whatsoever with the Scriptures. Never let learning be made of small account in reference to religion, when, without learning, a kingdom must remain virtually without a revelation. If there were no learning in a land, or if that learning were not brought to bear on translations of Scripture, how could one out of a thousand know any thing of the Bible? Those who would dispense with literature in a priesthood, undermine a nation's great rampart against heathenism. And just as the unlearned are thus, at the very outset, dependent altogether on the learned, it is not to be denied that the learned man will possess always a superiority over the unlearned, and that he has an apparatus at his disposal, which the other has not, for overcoming much that is difficult in Scripture.

But after all, when St. Peter speaks of "things hard to be understood," he cannot be considered as referring to obscurities which human learning will dissipate. He certainly mentions the "unlearned" as wresting these difficulties, implying that the want of one kind of learning produced the perversion. But, of course, he intends by "unlearned" those who were not fully taught of the Spirit, and not those who were deficient in the acquirements of the academy. There were but few of the learned of the earth amongst the apostles and their followers; and it were absurd to imagine that all but those wrested the Scriptures to their destruction. And, therefore, whilst we frankly allow that there are difficulties in Holy Writ, for the coping with which human learning equips an individual—historical difficulties, for example, grammatical, chronological—we see, at once, that it cannot be to these St. Peter refers; since, when he wrote, either those difficulties had not come into existence, or he himself was classed with the "unlearned," if by "unlearned" were intended the men unenlightened by science.

We thus assure ourselves, that, in allowing "things hard to be understood" to find place in the volume of inspiration, God has dealt with mankind irrespectively of the differences of rank. It cannot be human learning

which makes these things comparatively easy to be understood. They must remain hard, ay, and equally hard, whatever the literary advantages of a student; otherwise the whole statement of our text becomes unintelligible. The "unlearned," in short, are also "the unstable;" it is not the want of earthly scholarship which makes the difficulties, it is the want of moral steadfastness which occasions the wresting. We have nothing, therefore, to do, in commenting on the words of St. Peter, with difficulties which may be caused by a defective, and removed by a liberal education. The difficulties must be difficulties of subject. The things which are handled, and which are "hard to be understood," must, in themselves, be deep and mysterious, and not such as present intricacies which human criticism may prevail to unravel. And that there are many of these things in the Bible will be questioned by none who have given themselves to its study. It were a waste of time to adduce instances of the difficulties. To be unacquainted with them is to be unacquainted with Scripture; whilst to be surprised at their existence is to be surprised at what we may call unavoidable. It is this latter point which chiefly requires illustration, though there are others which must not be passed over in silence. We assume, therefore, as matter-of-fact, that there are in Scripture "things hard to be understood." We shall endeavor to show you, in the first place, that this fact was to be expected. We shall then, in the second place, point out the advantages which follow from the fact, and the dispositions which it should encourage.

And, first, we would show you—though this point requires but brief examination—that it was to be expected, that the Bible would contain "some things hard to be understood." We should like to be told what stamp of inspiration there would be upon a Bible containing nothing "hard to be understood." Is it not almost a self-evident proposition, that a revelation without difficulty could not be a revelation of divinity? If there lie any thing of that unmeasured separation, which we are all conscious there must lie, be-



tween ourselves and the Creator, is it not clear that God cannot be comprehensible by man; and that, therefore, any professed revelation, which left him not incomprehensible, would be thereby its own witness to the falsehood of its pretensions? You ask a Bible which shall, in every part, be simple and intelligible. But could such a Bible discourse to us of God, that Being who must remain, necessarily and forever, a mystery to the very highest of created intelligences? Could such a Bible treat of purposes, which, extending themselves over unlimited ages, and embracing the universe within their ranges, demand eternity for their development, and infinity for their theatre? Could such a Bible put forward any account of spiritual operations, seeing that, whilst confined by the trammels of matter, the soul cannot fathom herself, but withdraws herself, as it were, and shrinks from her own scrutiny? Could such a Bible, in short, tell us any thing of our condition, whether by nature or grace? Could it treat of the entrance of evil; could it treat of the Incarnation; of Regeneration; of a Resurrection; of an Immortality? In reference to all these matters, there are in the Bible "things hard to be understood." But it is not the manner in which they are handled which makes them "hard to be understood." The subject itself gives the difficulty. If you will not have the difficulty, you cannot have the subject. You must have a Revelation which shall say nothing on the nature of God, for that must remain inexplicable; nothing on the soul, for that must remain inexplicable; nothing on the processes and workings of grace, for these must remain inexplicable. You must have a Revelation, which shall not only tell you that such and such things are, but which shall also explain to you how they are: their mode, their constitution, their essence. And if this were the character of Revelation, it would undoubtedly be so constructed as never to overtask reason; but it would, just as clearly, be kept within this boundary only by being stripped of all on which we mainly need a Revelation. A Revelation in which there shall be nothing "hard to be understood," must limit itself by the powers of reason,

and, therefore, exclude those very topics on which, reason being insufficient, revelation is required. We wish you to be satisfied on the point, that Scriptural difficulties are not the result of obscurity of style, of brevity of communication, or of a designed abstruseness in the method of argument. The difficulties lie simply in the mysteriousness of the subjects. There is no want of simplicity of language when God is described to us as always every where. But who understands this? Can language make this intelligible? Revelation assures us of the fact; reason, with all her stridings, cannot overtake that fact. But would you, therefore, require that the omnipresence of Deity should be shut out from revelation? There is a perfect precision and plainness of speech, when the Bible discourses on the Word being made flesh, and on the second person in the Trinity humbling himself to the being "found in fashion as a man." Phil. 2: 8. But who can grapple with this prodigy? Is the palpable impossibility of explaining, or understanding it, at all the result of deficiency of statement? Who does not feel that the impossibility lies in himself, and that the matter is unintelligible, because necessarily overpassing the sweep of his intelligence? He can receive the bare fact; he cannot receive the explanation. But shall we, on this account, and just in order to have a Bible free from "things hard to be understood," require the Incarnation to be expunged from revelation?

We might argue in like manner with regard to every Scriptural difficulty. We account for the existence of these difficulties mainly by the fact that we are men, and, because men, finite in our capacities. We suppose not that it would have been possible, by any power of description or process of explanation, to have made those things which are now hard, easier to be understood, unless the human faculties had been amplified and strengthened, so that men had been carried up to a higher rank of being. We can quite believe that to an angel, endowed with a nobler equipment of intellectual energy, and unincumbered with a framework of matter, there would be a far clearer idea conveyed by the revela-

tion, that "there are three that bear record in heaven, and these three are one," 1 John, 5 : 7, than is conveyed by such announcement to ourselves. But it does not, therefore, follow that the doctrine of the Trinity might have been made as comprehensible by us as by angels. Let there be only the same amount of revelation, and the angel may know more than the man, because gifted with a keener and more vigorous understanding. And it is evident, therefore, that few things could have less warrant than the supposition, that revelation might have been so enlarged, that the knowledge of man would have reached to the measure of the knowledge of angels. We again say that there is no deficiency of revelation, and that the difficulties which occur in the perusal of Scripture result from the majesty of the introduced subjects, and the weakness of the faculties turned on their study. It is little short of a contradiction in terms, to speak of a revelation free altogether from "things hard to be understood." And we are well persuaded, that, however disposed men may be to make the difficulties an objection to the Bible, the absence of those difficulties would have been eagerly seized on as a proof of imposture. There would have been fairness in the objection—and scepticism would not have been slow in triumphantly urging it—that a book, which brought down the infinite to the level of the finite, must contain false representations, and deserve, therefore, to be placed under the outlawry of the world. We should have had reason taking up an opposite position, but one far more tenable than she occupies when arguing from the difficulty, against the divinity, of Scripture. Reason has sagacity enough, if you remove the bias of the "evil heart of unbelief," Heb. 3 : 12, to perceive the impossibility that God should be searched out and comprehended by man. And if, therefore, reason sat in judgment on a professed revelation of the Almighty, and found that it gave no account of the Deity, but one, in every respect, easy and intelligible, so that God described himself as removed not, either in essence or properties, from the ken of humanity, it can scarcely be questioned that she would give down as her verdict, and

that justice would loudly applaud the decision, that the alleged communication from heaven wanted the signs the most elementary of so illustrious an origin.

It can only be viewed as a necessary consequence on the grandeur of the subjects which form the matter of revelation, that, with every endeavor at simplicity of style and aptitude of illustration, the document contains statements which overmatch all but the faith of mankind. And, therefore, we are bold to say that we glory in the difficulties of Scripture. We can indeed desire, as well as those who would turn these difficulties into occasion of cavil and objection, to understand, with a thorough accuracy, the registered truths, and to penetrate and explore those solemn mysteries which crowd the pages of inspiration. We can feel, whilst the volume of Holy Writ lies open before us, and facts are presented which seem every way infinite—height, and breadth, and depth, and length, all defying the boldest journeyings of the spirit—we can feel the quick pulse of an eager wish to scale the mountain, or fathom the abyss. But, at the same time, we know, and we feel, that a Bible without difficulties were a firmament without stars. We know, and we feel, that a far-off land, enamelled, as we believe it, with a loveliness which is not of this earth, and inhabited by a tenantry gloriously distinct from our own order of being, would not be the magnificent and richly-peopled domain which it is, if its descriptions overpassed not the outlines of human geography. We know, and we feel, that the Creator of all things, he who stretched out the heavens, and sprinkled them with worlds, could not be, what we are assured that He is, inaccessiblely sublime and awfully great, if there could be given us a portrait of his nature and properties, whose every feature might be sketched by a human pencil, whose every characteristic scanned by a human vision. We know, and we feel, that the vast business of our redemption, arranged in the councils of the far-back eternity, and acted out amid the wondering and throbbings of the universe, could not have been that stupendous transaction which gave God glory by giving sinners safety, if the inspired account brought its dimen-



sions within the compass of a human arithmetic, or defined its issues by the lines of a human demarcation. And, therefore, do we also know and feel that it is a witness to the inspiration of the Bible, that, when this Bible would furnish us with notices of the unseen world hereafter to be traversed, or when it would turn thought on the Omnipotent, or when it would open up the scheme of the restoration of the fallen; then, with much that is beautifully simple, and which the wayfaring man can read and understand, there are mingled dark intimations, and pregnant hints, and undeveloped statements, before which the weak and the masterful must alike do the homage of a reverent and uncalculating submission. We could not rise up from the perusal of Scripture with a deep conviction that it is the word of the living God, if we had found no occasions on which reason was required to humble herself before giant-like truth, and implicit faith has been the only act which came within our range of moral achievement. We do not indeed say—for the saying would carry absurdity on its forefront—that we believe a document inspired, because, in part, incomprehensible. But if a document profess to be inspired; and if it treat of subjects which we can prove beforehand to be above and beyond the stretchings of our intellect; then, we do say that the finding nothing in such a document to baffle the understanding would be a proof of the most conclusive, that what alleges itself divine deserves rejection as a forgery. And whilst, therefore, we see going forward on all sides the accumulation of the evidences of christianity, and history and science are bringing their stores and emptying them at the feet of our religion, and the very wrath of the adversary, being the accomplishment of prophecy, is proving that we follow no “cunningly devised fables;” 2 Pet. 1 : 16; we feel that it was so much to be expected, yea, rather that it was altogether so unavoidable, that a revelation would, in many parts, be obscure, that we take as the last link in the chain of a lengthened and irrefragable demonstration, that there are in the Bible “things hard to be understood.”

But we trench on the second division of our subject, and will proceed, there-

fore, to the more distinct exposition of the advantages which follow, and the dispositions which should be encouraged by, the fact which has passed under review. We see, at once, from the statement of St. Peter, that effects, to all appearance disastrous, are produced by the difficulties of Scripture. The “unlearned and unstable” wrest these difficulties to “their own destruction;” and, therefore, though we have proved these difficulties unavoidable, by what process of reasoning can they be proved advantageous? Now, if we have carried you along with us through our foregoing argument, you are already furnished with one answer to this inquiry. We have shown you that the absence of difficulties would go far towards proving the Scriptures uninspired; and we need not remark that there must be a use for difficulties, if essential to the complete witness for the truth of christianity. But there are other advantages which must, on no account, be overlooked. We only wish it premised, that, though the difficulties of Scripture—as, for example, those parts which involve predestination—are wrested by many “to their own destruction,” the “unlearned and unstable” would have equally perished, had no difficulties whatsoever existed. As the case indeed now stands, the “things hard to be understood” are the stumbling-blocks over which they fall, and, falling, are destroyed. But they would have stumbled on the plain ground as well as on the rough: there being no more certain truth in theology, than that the cause of stumbling is the internal feebleness, and not the external impediment. A man may perish, ostensibly through abuse of the doctrine of election. He may say, I am elect, and, therefore, shall be saved, though I continue in sin. Thus he wrests election, and that too to his own certain destruction. But would he not have perished had he found no such doctrine to wrest? Ay, that he would; as fatally, and as finally. It is the love of sin, the determination to live in sin, which destroys him. And though, whilst giving the reins to his lusts, he attempts to derive from election a quietus and excuse, can you think that he would be at a loss to find them elsewhere, if there were no doctrine of election

from which, when abused, they may be wrenched and extorted? It is possible that a man may slay himself with "the sword of the Spirit;" Ephesians, 6 : 17; but only because he is so bent upon suicide, that, had he not found so costly a weapon, he would have fallen on a ruder and less polished. Satan has every kind of instrument in his armory, and leaves no one at a loss for a method of self-destruction. So that, had it not been unavoidable that "things hard to be understood" should find place in the Bible, their insertion, though apparently causing the ruin of many, would in no degree have impeached the loving-kindness of the Almighty. Scriptural difficulties destroy none who would not have been destroyed had no difficulties existed. And, therefore, difficulties might be permitted for certain ends which they, undoubtedly, subserve, and yet not a solitary individual be injured by an allowance which is to benefit the great body of the church. We wish this conclusion borne carefully in mind, because the first impression, on reading our text, is, that some are destroyed by the "things hard to be understood," and that they would not have been destroyed without these things to wrest. This first impression is a wrong one; the hard things giving the occasion, but never being the cause of destruction. The unstable wrest what is difficult. But, rather than be without something to pervert, if there were not the difficult, they would wrest the simple.

This being premised, we may enlarge, without fear, on the advantages resulting from the fact, that Scripture contains "some things hard to be understood." And first, if there were nothing in Scripture which overpowered our reason, who sees not that intellectual pride would be fostered by its study? The grand moral discipline which the Bible now exerts, and which renders its perusal the best exercise to which men can be subjected, lies simply in its perpetual requisition that Reason submit herself to Revelation. You can make no way with the disclosures of Holy Writ, until prepared to receive, on the authority of God, a vast deal which, of yourself, you cannot prove, and still more, which you cannot ex-

plain. And it is a fine schooling for the student, when, at every step in his research, he finds himself thrown on his faith, required to admit truth because the Almighty hath spoken it, and not because he himself can demonstrate. It is just the most rigorous and wholesome tuition under which the human mind can be brought, when it is continually called off from its favorite processes of argument and commentary, and summoned into the position of a meek recipient of intelligence to be taken without questioning—honored with belief when it cannot be cleared by exposition. And of all this schooling and tuition you would instantly deprive us, if you took away from the Bible "things hard to be understood." Nay, it were comparatively little that we should lose the discipline: we should live under a counter system, encouraging what we are bound to repress. If man were at all left to entertain the idea that he can comprehend God, or measure his purposes—and such idea might be lawful, were there no mysteries in Scripture—we know no bounds which could be set to his intellectual haughtiness: for if reason seemed able to embrace Deity, who could persuade her that she is scant and contracted? I might almost be pardoned the fostering a consciousness of mental greatness, and the supposing myself endowed with a vast nobility of spirit, if I found that I kept pace with all the wonders which God brought out from his own nature and his own dwelling, and if no disclosures were made to this creation too dazzling for my scrutiny, or too deep for my penetration. A Bible without difficulties would be a censer full of incense to man's reason. It would be the greatest flatterer of reason, passing on it a compliment and eulogy which would infinitely outdo the most far-fetched of human panegyrics. And if the fallen require to be kept humble; if we can advance in spiritual attainment only in proportion as we feel our insignificance; would not this conversion of the Bible into the very nurse and encourager of intellectual pride, abstract its best worth from revelation; and who, therefore, will deny that we are advantaged by the fact, that there are in Scripture "things hard to be understood?"



We remark again, that though controversy have its evils, it has also its uses. We never infer, that, because there is no controversy in a church, there must be the upholding of sound doctrine. It is not the stagnant water which is generally the purest. And if there are no differences of opinion which set men on examining and ascertaining their own belief, the probability is, that, like the Samaritans of old, they will worship they "know not what." John, 4 : 22. Heresy itself is, in one sense, singularly beneficial. It helps to sift a professing community, and to separate the chaff from the wheat. And whilst the unstable are carried about by the winds of false doctrine, those who keep their steadfastness find, as it were, their moral atmosphere cleared by the tempest. We consider this statement to be that of St. Paul, when he says to the Corinthians, "There must be also heresies amongst you, that they which are approved may be made manifest." 1 Cor. 11 : 19. And it is not the mere separation of the genuine from the fictitious which is effected through the publication of error. We hold that heresies have been of vast service to the Church, in that they have caused truth to be more thoroughly scanned, and all its bearings and boundaries explored with a most pains-taking industry. It is astonishing how apt men are to rest in general and ill-defined notions, so that, when interrogated and probed on an article of faith, they show themselves unable to give account of their belief. When a new error is propounded, you will find that candid men will confess, that, on examining their own views on the litigated point, they have found them in many respects vague and incoherent; so that, until driven to the work of expounding and defining, they have never suspected their ignorance upon matters with which they professed themselves altogether familiar. We think that few men would have correct notions of truth, unless occasionally compelled to investigate their own opinions. They take for granted that they understand what they believe. But when heresy or controversy arises, and they are required to state what they hold, they will themselves be surprised at the confusion of their sentiments.

We are persuaded, for example, that, however mischievous in many respects may have been the modern agitation of the question of Christ's humanity, the great body of christians have been thereby advantaged. Until the debate was raised, hundreds and thousands were unconsciously holding error. Being never required to define the true doctrine of the Savior's person, they never doubted that they knew and understood it, though, all the while, they either confounded the natures, or multiplied the person; or—and this was the ordinary case—formed no idea at all on so mysterious, yet fundamental a matter. Thus controversy stirs the waters, and prevents their growing stagnant. We do not indeed understand from the "must be" of St. Paul, that the well-being of the church is dependent on heresy, so that, unless heresy enter, the church cannot prosper. But we can readily suppose that God, foreknowing the corruptions which would be attempted of the Gospel, determined to employ these corruptions as instruments for speeding onward the growth in grace of his people. The "must be" refers to human depravity and satanic influence. It indicates a necessity for which the creature alone is answerable, whilst the end, which heresies subserve, is that which most engages the interferences of the Creator. Thus we speak of evil as beneficial, only as overruled by the Almighty, and pronounce controversy advantageous, because a corrupt nature needs frequent agitation. If never called to defend the truth, the church would comparatively lose sight of what truth is. And therefore, however the absence of controversy may agree well with a millennial estate, we are amongst the last who would desire that it should not now be heard in the land. We feel that if now "the wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid," Isa. 11 : 6, we should have nothing but the millennium of liberalism: the lamb being nothing more than the wolf in disguise, and the kid the leopard with his spots slightly colored. Such is the constitution of man—and such it will be, till there pass over this globe a mighty regeneration—that, unless there be opposition, we shall have no purity. Dissent itself, with its manifold

and multiform evils, has done the church service; and, by rousing energies which might otherwise have lain dormant, has given fixedness where it thought to undermine. But if there were no scriptural difficulties, we could have no controversy. The "things hard to be understood" form the groundwork of differences of opinion: and, if these were swept away, there would either be space for only one theory, or, if another were broached, it would be too absurd for debate. So that scriptural difficulties are literally the preservatives of sound doctrine. The church would slumber into ignorance of even simple and elementary truth, if there were no hard things, which, wrested by the unstable, keep her always on the alert. And if, therefore, the upholding, through successive generations, of a clear and orthodox creed, be a result which you hail as teeming with advantage, have we not a right to press home on you the fact, that it is advantageous to mankind that there are in the Bible "some things hard to be understood?"

We might extend on all sides our view of the advantages of difficulties. But we are confined by the limits of a discourse, and shall only adduce one other illustration. When I read the Bible, and meet with passages which, after the most patient exercises of thought and research, remain dark and impenetrable, then, in the most especial degree, I feel myself immortal. The finding a thing "hard to be understood" ministers to my consciousness that I am no perishable creature, destined to a finite existence, but a child of eternity, appointed to survive the dissolutions of matter, and to enter on another and an untried being. If the Bible be God's revelation of himself to mankind, it is a most fair expectation, that, at one time or another, the whole of this revelation will be clear and accessible; that the obscure points, which we cannot now elucidate, and the lofty points, which we cannot now scale, will be enlightened by the flashings of a brighter luminary, and given up to the marchings of a more vigorous inquiry. We can never think that God would tell man things for the understanding of which he is to be always incapacitated. If he know them not now, the very fact of their being told is sufficient proof

that he shall know them hereafter. And, therefore, in every scriptural difficulty I read the pledge of a mighty enlargement of the human faculties. In every mystery, though a darkness thick as the Egyptian may now seem to shroud it, I can find one bright and burning spot, glowing with promise that there shall yet come a day, when, every power of the soul being wrought into a celestial strength, I shall be privileged, as it were, to stretch out the hand of the lawgiver and roll back the clouds which here envelope the truth. I can muse upon one of those things which are "hard to be understood," till it seem to put on the prophet's mantle, and preach to me of futurity; telling me, in accents more spirit-stirring than those of the boldest of mortal oratory, that the present is but the infancy of my being; and that, in a nobler and more glorious estate, I shall start from moral and mental dwarfishness, and, endowed with vigor of perception, and keenness of vision, and vastness of apprehension, walk the labyrinth, and pierce the rock, and weigh the mountain. Oh, I can thank God that, amongst those countless mercies which he has poured down on our pathway, he hath given us a Bible which is not in every part to be explained. The difficulties of Holy Writ—let them be made by objectors the subjects of marvel, or of cavil—they constitute one great sheet of our charter of immortality: and, in place of wondering that God should have permitted them, or lamenting that they cannot be overcome, I rejoice in them as earnest, given me by Him "who cannot lie," Titus, 1: 2, that man hath yet to advance to a sublime rank amongst orders of intelligence, and to stand, in the maturity of his strength, in the very centre of the panorama of truth. And if it be true that every mystery in Scripture, as giving pledge of an enlargement of capacities, witnesses to the glories with which the future comes charged; and if from every intricate passage, and every dark saying, and every unfathomable statement, we draw new proof of the magnificence of our destinies; which of you will withhold his confession, that the difficulties of the Bible are productive of benefit, and that, consequently, there result advantages from the fact, that



there are in Scripture "some things hard to be understood?"

Such are certain of the advantages which we proposed to investigate. It yet remains that we briefly state, and call upon you to cultivate, the dispositions which should be brought to the study of a Bible thus "hard to be understood." We have shown you that there are difficulties in Scripture which must remain unexplained whilst we continue in the flesh. Other difficulties indeed may be removed by thought, and prayer, and research; and we would not have you sparing of any of these appliances when you examine the volume of inspiration. But difficulties which are inherent in the subject; things "hard to be understood" because they deal, for example, with the nature, and purposes, and workings of Deity; these are not to be mastered by any powers of reason, and are, therefore, matters for the exercise of faith rather than of intellect. We ought to know, before we open the Bible, that it must present difficulties of this class and description. We are therefore bound, if, in idolizing reason, we should not degrade and deery it, to sit down to the study of Scripture with a meek and chastened understanding, expecting to be baffled, and ready to submit. We tell the young amongst you more especially, who, in the pride of an undisciplined intellect, would turn to St. Paul as they turn to Bacon or Locke, arguing that what was written for man must be comprehensible by man—we tell them that nothing is excellent out of its place; and that, in the examination of Scripture, then only does reason show herself noble, when, conscious of the presence of a king, the knee is bent, and the head uncovered. We would have it, therefore, remembered, that the docility and submissiveness of a child alone befit the student of the Bible; and that, if we would not have the whole volume darkened, its simplest truths eluding the grasp of our understanding, or gaining, at least, no hold on our affections, we must lay aside the feelings which we carry into the domains of science and philosophy, not arming ourselves with a chivalrous resolve to conquer, but with one which it is a thousand-fold harder either to form or execute, to yield.

The Holy Spirit alone can make us feel the things which are easy to be understood, and prevent our wresting those which are hard. Never then should the Bible be opened except with prayer for the teachings of this Spirit. You will read without profit, as long as you read without prayer. It is only in the degree that the Spirit, which indited a text, takes it from the page and breathes it into the heart, that we can comprehend its meaning, be touched by its beauty, stirred by its remonstrance, or animated by its promise. We shall never, then, master scriptural difficulties by the methods which prove successful in grappling with philosophical. Why is it that the poor peasant, whose understanding is weak and undisciplined, has clear insight into the meaning of verses, and finds in them irresistible power and inexhaustible comfort, whilst the very same passages are given up as mysteries, or overlooked as unimportant, by the high and lettered champion of a scholastic theology? It were idle to deny that our rustic divines will oftentimes travel, with a far stancher and more dominant step than our collegiate, into the depths of a scriptural statement; and that you might obtain from some of the patriarchs of our valleys, whose chief instruction has been their own communing with the Almighty, such explanations of "things hard to be understood" as would put to shame the commentaries of our most learned expositors. And of this phenomenon the solution would be hopeless, if there were not a broad instituted difference between human and sacred literature: "the kingdom of heaven" being "like unto treasure hid in a field;" Matt. 13 : 44; and the finding this treasure depending not at all on the power of the intellect brought to the search, but on the heartiness and the earnestness with which the Psalmist's prayer is used, "open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Psalm 119 : 18. If you open a scientific book, or study an abstruse and metaphysical work, let reason gird herself boldly for the task: the province belongs fairly to her jurisdiction; and she may cling to her own energies without laying herself open to the charge, that, according to the charac-

teristic which Joel gives of the last times, the weak is vaunting itself the strong. Joel, 3 : 10. But if you open the Bible, and sit down to the investigation of scriptural truth, you are in a district which lies far beyond the just limits of the empire of reason: there is need of an apparatus wholly distinct from that which sufficed for your former inquiry: and if you think to comprehend revelation, except so far as the author shall act as interpreter, you are, most emphatically, the weak pronouncing yourselves the strong, and the Bible shall be to you a closed book, and you shall break not the seals which God himself hath placed on the volume. Oh, they are seals which melt away like a snow-wreath, before the breathings of the Spirit; but not all the fire of human genius shall ever prevail to dissolve or loosen them.

We feel that we have a difficult part to perform in ministering to the congregation which assembles within these walls. Gathered as it is from many parts, and, without question, including oftentimes numbers who make no profession whatsoever of religion, we think it bound on us to seek out great variety of subjects, so that, if possible, the case of none of the audience may be quite overlooked in a series of discourses. And we feel it peculiarly needful that we touch now and then, as we have done this night, on topics connected with infidelity, because we fear that infidelity is growing in the land, and specially amongst its well-educated youth. If there be one saying in the Bible, bearing reference to the things of the present dispensation, on which we look with greater awe than on another, it is this of Christ Jesus, "when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke, 18 : 8. It would seem to mark out a fierce conflict of antagonist principles, issuing in the almost total ejection of christianity; so that, when the day of the second advent is ushered in by its august heraldry, it shall dawn upon blasted and blackened scenery, and discover the mass of mankind carrying on, amid demolished temples and desecrated Bibles, the orgies of a dark and desperate revelry. And knowing that such is the tenor of prophecy, and gathering from many and infallible signs that already has the war-tug begun, we

warn you, and beseech you, with all the veins of our heart, that ye be on your guard against the inroads of scepticism. We speak peculiarly to the young, the young men who throng this chapel, and who, in the intercourses of life, will meet with many who lie in wait to deceive. It is not possible that you should mix much with the men of this liberal and libertine age, and not hear insinuations, either more or less direct, thrown out against the grand and saving tenets of christianity. You cannot, even by the exercise of the most godly circumspection, keep yourselves wholly at a distance from the sarcasms or sophisms of insidious and pestilent teachers. The enemy is ever on the watch; and, adapting himself to the various dispositions and circumstances of those whom he seeks to entangle, can address the illiterate with a hollow jest, and assail the educated with a well-turned objection. Oh, I could tremble for those, who, blind to the weakness which is naturally the portion of our race, and rashly confident in a strength to which the fallen have no jot of pretension, adventure themselves now upon the sea of life, and go forth into a world where must often be encountered temptations to think lightly of the faith of their fathers. Oh, I say, I could tremble for them. If any amongst you—I speak it with all affection, and from the knowledge which positions in life have enabled me to form of the progress of youthful infidelity—if any amongst you enter the busy scenes of society, with an overweening confidence in your own capacities, with the lofty opinion of the powers of reason, and with a hardy persuasion that there is nerve enough in the mind to grapple with divine mysteries, and vigor enough to discover truth for itself—if, in short, you, the weak, shall say we are strong—then I fear for you, far more than I can tell, that you may fall an easy prey to some champion of heretical error, and give ready ear to the flattering schemes of the worshippers of intellect; and that thus a mortal blight shall desecrate the buds of early promise, and eternity frown on you with all the cheerlessness which it wears to those who despise the blood of atonement, and you—the children, it may



be, of pious parents, over whose infancy a godly father hath watched, and whose young years have been guarded by the tender solitudes of a righteous mother—you may win to yourselves a heritage of shame and confusion, and go down, at the judgment, into the pit of the unbelieving and scornful. Better, infinitely better would it have been, that your parents had seen you coffined and sepulchred, ere as yet ye knew evil from good, than that they should have nursed you, and nurtured you, to swell, in latter days, the ranks of the apostate. Be admonished, by the subject which we have this night discussed, to distrust yourselves, and to depend on a higher teaching than human. Difficulties there are in the Bible: but they ought rather to assure, than make you doubtful of, the divinity of its origin. And if you are assailed with sceptical objections which you are unable to answer, have the candor and modesty to suspect that a straight-forward and sufficient answer there may be, though you have not the penetration to discover it. Lay not the blame on the deficiencies of christianity, when it may possibly lie in the deficiencies of your own information. The argument was never framed against the truth of our religion, which has not been completely taken off, and triumphantly refuted. Hesitate, therefore, before you conclude a sceptic in the right, just because you are not able to prove him in the wrong. We give you this advice, simply and affectionately. We see your danger, and we long for your souls. Bear with us yet a moment. We would not weary you: but speaking on the topic of "things hard to be understood," we feel compelled to dwell, at some length, on the scepticism of the age. I can never dare answer, when I stand up in this holy place, and speak to you on the truths of our religion, that I address not some who throw on these truths habitual contempt, who count christianity the plaything of children, invented by imposture, and cradled in ignorance. And if I knew that even now there were such amongst you; if they were pointed out to me, so that I might stand face to face with the despisers of our Lord—the thunder, the sack-

cloth of hair, the worm that dies not, the fire that is not quenched—should I array against them these terrible things, and turn upon them the battery of the denunciations of God's wrath? Alas, alas, I should have no moral hold on them with all this apparatus of wo and destruction. They might wrap themselves up in their scepticism. They might tell me they had read too much, and learned too much, to be scared by the trickeries of priestcraft: and thus, by denying the authority of Scripture, they would virtually blunt all my weapons of attack, and show themselves invulnerable, because they had made themselves insensible. There is nothing that the minister could do, save that which Elisha the prophet did, when speaking with Hazeal: "he settled his countenance steadfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept." 2 Kings, 8:10. Who could do otherwise than weep over the spectacle of talents, and hopes, and affections, tainted with the leprous spots of moral decay, the spectacle of a blighted immortality, the spectacle—a glimpse of which must almost convulse with amazement the glorious ranks of the celestial world—that of a being whom Christ purchased with his blood, whom the Almighty hath invited, yea besought, to have mercy upon himself, turning into jest the messages of the Gospel, denying the divinity of the Lord his Redeemer, or building up, with the shreds and fragments of human reason, a baseless structure, which, like the palace of ice, shall resolve itself suddenly into a tumultuous flood, bearing away the inhabitant, a struggling thing, but a lost? Yea, if I knew there were one amongst you who had surrendered himself to the lies of an ensnaring philosophy, then, although I should feel, that, perhaps even whilst I speak, he is pitying my credulity, or ridiculing my fanaticism, I would not suffer him to depart without calling on the congregation to baptize him, as it were, with their tears; and he should be singled out—oh, not for rebuke, not for contempt, not for anger—but as more deserving to be wept over and wailed over than the poorest child of human calamity, more worthy of the agonies of

mortal sympathy than he who eats the bitterest bread of affliction, and in whose ear ring mournfully the sleepless echoes of a funeral bell. Yea, and he should not leave the sanctuary till we had told him, that, though there be in the Bible "things hard to be understood," there is one thing beautifully plain, and touchingly simple: and that is, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John, 1: 7. So that it is not yet too late: the blasphemer, the scorner, the infidel—oh, the fire is not yet falling, and the earth is not yet opening—let him turn unto the Lord, and confess his iniquity, and cry for pardon, and a sweep of joy from the angels' harp-strings shall tell out the astounding fact, that he is no longer a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.

But we hasten to a conclusion. We again press upon all of you the importance of reading the Bible with prayer. And whilst the consciousness that Scripture contains "things hard to be understood" should bring us to its study in a dependent and humble temper, the thought, that what we know not now we shall know hereafter, should make each difficulty, as we leave it un-

vanquished, minister to our assurance that a wider sphere of being, a nearer vision, and mightier faculties, await us when the second advent of the Lord winds up the dispensation. Thus should the mysteries of the Bible teach us, at one and the same time, our nothingness, and our greatness; producing humility, and animating hope. I bow before these mysteries. I knew that I should find, and I pretend not to remove, them. But whilst I thus prostrate myself, it is with deep gladness and exultation of spirit. God would not have hinted the mystery, had he not designed hereafter to explain. And, therefore, are my thoughts on a far-off home, and rich things are around me, and the voices of many harpers, and the shinings of bright constellations, and the clusters of the cherub and the seraph; and a whisper, which seems not of this earth, is circulating through the soul, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Cor. 13: 12. May God grant unto all of us to be both abased and quickened by those things in the Bible which are "hard to be understood."



# SERMONS PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

February, 1836.

The Author begs to state that he prints these Sermons in compliance with the wish of many Members of the University. Immediately after their delivery he received an address from the resident Bachelors and Undergraduates, headed by the most distinguished names, and numerous signed, requesting their publication. The same request was also made from other quarters. Under these circumstances the Author felt that he had nothing to do, but to regret that the Sermons were not more deserving of the interest thus kindly manifested, and to commit them at once to the press.

CAMBERWELL, March 10, 1836.

## SERMON I.

### THE GREATNESS AND CONDESCENSION OF GOD.

“Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and lifteth up all those that be bowed down.”—Psalm 145 : 13, 14.

What we admire in these verses, is their combining the magnificence of unlimited power with the assiduity of unlimited tenderness. It is this combination which men are apt to regard as well-nigh incredible, supposing that a Being so great as God can never concern himself with beings so inconsiderable as themselves. Tell them that God lifteth up those that be bowed down, and they cannot imagine that his kingdom and dominion are unbounded ; —or tell them, on the other hand, of the greatness of his empire, and they think it impossible that he should uphold all that fall. If you represent Deity as busied with what they reckon insignificant, the rapid impression is, that he cannot, at the same time, be equally attentive to what is vast ; and if you exhibit him as occupied with what is vast, there is a sudden misgiving that the insignificant must escape his observation. And it is of great importance,

that men be taught to view in God that combination of properties which is affirmed in our text. It is certain that the greatness of God is often turned into an argument, by which men would bring doubt on the truths of Redemption and Providence. The unmeasured inferiority of man to his Maker is used in proof, that so costly a work as that of Redemption can never have been executed on our behalf ; and that so unwearied a watchfulness as that of Providence can never be engaged in our service. Whereas, no reason whatever can be derived from our confessed insignificance, against our being the objects whether of Redemption or of Providence—seeing it is equally characteristic of Deity, to attend to the inconsiderable and to the great, to extend his dominion throughout all generations, and to lift up those that be bowed down.

It is on this truth we would employ

our present discourse, endeavoring to prove, that human insignificance, as set in contrast with divine greatness, furnishes no argument against the doctrine of our Redemption, and none against that of an universal Providence.

Now a man will consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained, and he will perceive that the earth on which we dwell is but the solitary unit of an innumerable multitude. It appears to him as though, if this globe were suddenly annihilated, it would scarcely be missed from the firmament, and leave no felt vacancy in the still crowded fields of the heavens. And if our earth be thus so insignificant an unit that its abstraction would not disturb the splendors and harmonies of the universe, how shall we think that God hath done so wondrous a thing for its inhabitants as to send his own Son to die in their stead? Thus an argument is attempted to be drawn from the insignificance of man to the improbability of Redemption; one verse of our text is set against the other; and the confessed fact, that God's dominion is throughout all generations, is opposed to the alleged fact, that he gave his own Son that he might lift up the fallen.

But it ought at least to be remembered that man was God's workmanship, made after his image, and endowed with powers which fitted him for lofty pursuits. The human race may or may not be insignificant. We know nothing of the orders of intelligence which stretch upwards between ourselves and God; and we are therefore incompetent to decide what place we occupy in the scale of creation. But at the least we know, independently of Revelation, that a magnificent scene was appointed for our dwelling; and that, when God reared a home for man, he built it of the sublime and the beautiful, and lavished alike his might and his skill on the furniture of its chambers. No one can survey the works of nature, and not perceive that God has some regard for the children of men, however fallen and polluted they may be. And if God manifest a regard for us in temporal things, it must be far from incredible that he would do the same in spiritual. There

can be nothing fairer than the expectation, that he would provide for our well-being as moral and accountable creatures, with a care at least equal to that exhibited towards us in our natural capacity. So that it is perfectly credible that God would do something on behalf of the fallen; and then the question is, whether any thing less than Redemption through Christ would be of worth and of efficacy? It is certain that we cannot conceive any possible mode, except the revealed mode through the sacrifice of Christ, in which God could be both just and the justifier of sinners. Reckon and reason as we will, we can sketch out no plan by which transgressors might be saved, the divine attributes honored, and yet Christ not have died. So far as we have the power of ascertaining, man must have remained unredeemed, had he not been redeemed through the Incarnation and Crucifixion. And if it be credible that God would effectively interpose on man's behalf; and if the only discoverable method in which he could thus interpose, be that of Redemption through the sacrifice of his Son; what becomes of the alleged incredibility, founded on the greatness of God as contrasted with the insignificance of man? We do not depreciate the wonders of the interference. We will go all lengths in proclaiming it a prodigy which confounds the most masterful, and in pronouncing it a mystery whose depths not even angels can fathom, that, for the sake of beings inconsiderable as ourselves, there should have been acted out an arrangement which brought Godhead into flesh, and gave up the Creator to ignominy and death. But the greatness of the wonder furnishes no just ground for its disbelief. There can be no weight in the reasoning, that because man is so low and God so high, no such work can have been wrought as the Redemption of our race. We are certain that we are cared for in our temporal capacity; and we conclude, therefore, that we cannot have been neglected in our eternal. And then—finding that, unless redeemed through the sacrifice of Christ, there is no supposable method of human deliverance—it is not the brightness of the moon as she travels in her lustre, and it is



not the array of stars which are marshalled on the firmament, that shall make us deem it incredible that God would give his Son for our rescue: rather, since moon and stars light up man's home, they shall do nothing but assure us of the Creator's loving-kindness; and thus render it a thing to be believed—though still amazing, still stupendous—that He whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and whose dominion endureth throughout all generations, should have made himself to be sin for us, that He might uphold all that fall, and lift up all those that be bowed down.

But it is in regard to the doctrine of an universal Providence that men are most ready to raise objections, from the greatness of God as contrasted with their own insignificance. They cannot believe, that he who is so mighty as to rule the heavenly hosts can condescend to notice the wants of the meanest of his creatures; and thus they deny to him the combination of properties asserted in our text, that, whilst possessed of unlimited empire, he sustains the feeble and raises the prostrate.

We shall not stay to expose the falseness of an opinion which has sometimes found advocates, that, having created this world, God left it to itself, and bestows no thought on its concerns. But whilst few would hold the opinion in the extent thus announced, many would limit the divine Providence, and thus take from the doctrine its great beauty and comfort. It is easy and common to represent it as incompatible with the confessed grandeur of our Maker, that he should busy himself with the concerns of the poorest of his creatures: but such reasoning betrays ignorance as to what it is in which greatness consists. It may be that, amongst finite beings, it is not easy, and perhaps not possible, that attention to what is minute, or comparatively unimportant, should be combined with attention to things of vast moment. But we never reckon it an excellence that there is not, or cannot be, this union. On the contrary, we should declare that man at the very summit of true greatness, who proved himself able to unite what had seemed incompatible. If a man, for example, be a great statesman, and the management

of a vast empire be delivered into his hands, we can scarcely expect that, amid the multiplicity of mighty affairs which solicit his attention, he should find time for the duties of more ordinary life. We feel that, engrossed with occupations of overwhelming importance, it is hardly possible that he should be assiduous in the instruction of his children, or the inspection of his servants, or the visiting and relieving his distressed fellow-men. But we never feel that his greatness would be diminished, if he were thus assiduous. We are ready, on the contrary, to admit that we should give him, in a higher degree than ever, our respect and admiration, if we knew that, whilst he had his eye on every wheel in the machinery of government, and his comprehensive mind included all that had a bearing on the well-being of the empire, he discharged with exemplary fidelity every relative duty, and entered with as much assiduousness into all that concerned his neighbors and dependents, as though he had not to extend his carefulness over the thousand departments of a complicated system. What would be thought of that man's estimate of greatness, who should reckon it derogatory to the statesman that he thus combined attention to the inconsiderable with attention to the stupendous; and who should count it inconsistent with the loftiness of his station, that, amid duties as arduous as faithfully discharged, he had an ear for the prattle of his children, and an eye for the interests of the friendless, and a heart for the sufferings of the destitute? Would there not be a feeling, mounting almost to veneration, towards the ruler who should prove himself equal to the superintending every concern of an empire, and who could yet give a personal attention to the wants of many of the poorest of its families; and who, whilst gathering within the compass of an ample intelligence every question of foreign and home policy, protecting the commerce, maintaining the honor, and fostering the institutions of the state, could minister tenderly at the bedside of sickness, and hearken patiently to the tale of calamity, and be as active for the widow and the orphan, as though his whole business were to light-

en the pressure of domestic affliction ?

We can appeal, then, to your own notions of true greatness, for a refutation of the common arguments against the Providence of God. We know not why that should be derogatory to the majesty of the Ruler of the universe, which, by the general confession, would add immeasurably to the majesty of one of the earth's potentates. And if we should rise in our admiration and applause of a statesman, or sovereign, in proportion as he showed himself capable of attending to things comparatively petty and insignificant, without neglecting the grand and momentous, certainly we are bound to apply the same principle to our Maker—to own it, that is, essential to his greatness, that, whilst marshalling planets and ordering the motions of all worlds throughout the sweep of immensity, he should yet feed "the young ravens that call upon him," and number the very hairs of our heads; essential, in short, that, whilst his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth throughout all generations, he should uphold all that fall, and raise up those that are bowed down.

We would add to this, that objections against the doctrine of God's providence are virtually objections against the great truths of creation. Are we to suppose that this or that ephemeral thing, the tiny tenant of a leaf or a bubble, is too insignificant to be observed by God; and that it is absurd to think that the animated point, whose existence is a second, occupies any portion of those inspections which have to spread themselves over the revolutions of planets, and the movements of angels? Then to what authorship are we to refer this ephemeral thing? We subject it to the powers of the microscope, and are amazed, perhaps, at observing its exquisite symmetries and adornments, with what skill it has been fashioned, with what glory it has been clothed: but we find it said that it is dishonouring to God to suppose him careful or observant of this insect; and then our difficulty is, who made, who created this insect? I know not what there can be too inconsiderable for the providence, if it have not been too inconsiderable for the creation, of God. What it was not unworthy of God to form, it

cannot be unworthy of God to preserve. Why declare any thing excluded by its insignificance from his watchfulness, which could not have been produced but by his power? Thus the universal Providence of God is little more than an inference from the truth of his being the universal Creator. And men may speak of the littleness of this or that creature, and ask how we can believe that the animalcule, scarce perceptible as it floats by us on the evening breeze, is observed and cared for by that Being, inaccessible in his sublimity, who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers:" but we ask in reply, whether or no it be God who gave its substance and animation to this almost invisible atom; and unless they can point out to us another creator, we shall hold that it must be every way worthy of God, that he should turn all the watchfulness of a guardian on the work of his own hands—for it cannot be more true, that, as universal Creator, he has such power that his dominion endureth throughout all generations, than that, as universal sustainer, he has such carefulness for whatever he hath formed, that he upholdeth them that fall, and raiseth up all that are bowed down.

But up to this point, we have been rather engaged with removing objections against the doctrine of God's providence, than with examining that doctrine, as it may be derived from our text. In regard to the doctrine itself, it is evident that nothing can happen in any spot of the universe which is not known to him who is emphatically the Omniscient. But it is far more than the inspection of an ever-vigilant observer which God throws over the concerns of creation. It is not merely that nothing can occur without the knowledge of our Maker: it is that nothing can occur, but by either his appointment or permission. We say either his appointment or permission—for we know, that, whilst he ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth, there is much which he allows to be done, but which cannot be referred directly to his authorship. It is in this sense that his Providence has to do with what is evil, overruling it so that it becomes subservient to the march of



his purposes. The power that is exerted over the waters of the ocean, is exerted also over the more boisterous waves of rebellion and crime; and God saith to the one, as to the other, "hitherto shall ye come and no further." And as to actions and occurrences of an opposite description, such as are to be reckoned good and not evil—can it be denied that Providence extends to all these, and is intimately concerned with their production and performance? It must ever be remembered that God is the first cause, and that upon the first all secondary depend. We are apt to forget this, though unquestionably a self-evident principle, and then we easily lose ourselves in a wide labyrinth, and are perplexed by the multiplicities of agency with which we seem surrounded.

But how beautifully simple does every thing appear, when we trace one hand in all that occurs. And this we are bound to do, if we would allow its full range to the doctrine of God's providence. It is God whose energies are extended through earth, and sea, and air, causing those unnumbered and beneficial results which we ascribe to nature. It is God by whom all those contingencies which seem to us fortuitous and casual are directed, so that events, brought round by what men count accident, proceed from divine, and therefore irreversible appointment. It is God by whom the human will is secretly inclined towards righteousness; and thus there is not wrought a single action such as God can approve, to whose performance God hath not instigated. It is God from whom come those many interpositions, which every one has to remark in the course of a long life, when dangers are averted, fears dispersed, and sorrows removed. It is God, who, acting through the instrumentality of various, and, to all appearance, conflicting causes, keeps together the discordant elements of society, and prevents the whole frame-work of civil institutions from being rapidly dislocated. It is God—but why attempt to enumerate? Where is the creature which God does not sustain? where is the solitude which God does not fill? where is the want which God does not supply? where is the motion which God does not direct? where is the ac-

tion which God does not overrule? If, according to the words of the Psalmist, we could ascend up to heaven, and make our bed in hell; if we could take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; in all this enormous travel, in this journey across the fields of unlimited space, we could never reach the loneliest spot at which Deity was not present as an upholder and guardian; never find the lonely world, no, nor the lonely scene on any one of those globes with which immensity is strewed, which was not as strictly watched by the ever-wakeful eye of Omniscience, as though every where else the universe were a void, and this the alone home of life and intelligence. We have an assurance which nothing can shake, because derived from the confessed nature of Godhead, that, in all the greatness of his Almightyness, our Maker is perpetually passing from star to star, and from system to system, that he may observe what is needed by every order of being, and minister supply—and yet not passing; for he is always present, present as much at one moment as at another, and in one world as in another immeasurably distant; and covering with the wing of his Providence whatever he hath formed, and whatever he hath animated.

And if we bring our thoughts within narrower compass, and confine them to the world appointed for men's dwelling, it is a beautiful truth that there cannot be the creature so insignificant, the care so inconsiderable, the action so unimportant, as to be overlooked by Him from whom we draw being. I know that it is not the monarch alone, at the head of his tribes and provinces, who is observed by the Almighty; and that it is not only at some great crisis in life, that an individual becomes an object of the attention of his Maker. I know rather that the poorest, the meanest, the most despised, shares with the monarch the notice of the universal Protector; and that this notice is so unwearied and incessant, that when he goes to his daily toil or his daily prayer, when he lies down at night, or rises in the morning, or gathers his little ones to the scanty meal, the poor man is tenderly watched by his

God; and he cannot weep the tear which God sees not, nor smile the smile which God notes not, nor breathe the wish which God hears not. The man indeed of exalted rank, on whom may depend the movements of an empire, is regarded, with a vigilance which never knows suspense, by Him "who giveth salvation unto kings;" and the Lord, "to whom belong the shields of the earth," bestows on this man whatever wisdom he displays, and whatever strength he puts forth, and whatever success he attains. But the carefulness of Deity is in no sense engrossed by the distinguished individual; but, just as the regards which are turned on this earth interfere not with those which pour themselves over far-off planets and distant systems, so, whilst the chieftain is observed and attended with the assiduousness of what might seem an undivided guardianship, the very beggar is as much the object of divine inspection and succor, as though, in the broad sweep of animated being, there were no other to need the sustaining arm of the Creator.

And this is what we understand by the providence of the Almighty. We believe of this providence that it extends itself to every household, and throws itself round every individual, and takes part in every business, and is concerned with every sorrow, and accessory to every joy. We believe that it encircles equally the palace and the cottage; guiding and upholding alike the poor and the rich; ministering to the king in his councils, and to the merchant in his commerce, and to the scholar in his study, and to the laborer in his husbandry—so that, whatever my rank and occupation, at no moment am I withdrawn from the eye of Deity, in no lawful endeavor am I left to myself, in no secret anxiety have I only my own heart with which I may commune. Oh! it were to take from God all that is most encouraging in his attributes and prerogatives, if you could throw doubt on this doctrine of his universal providence. It is an august contemplation, that of the Almighty as the architect of creation, filling the vast void with magnificent structures. We are presently confounded when bidden to meditate on the

eternity of the Most High: for it is an overwhelming truth, that he who gave beginning to all besides could have had no beginning himself. And there are other characteristics and properties of Deity, whose very mention excites awe, and on which the best eloquence is silence. But whilst the universal providence of God is to the full as incomprehensible as aught else which appertains to Divinity, there is nothing in it but what commends itself to the warmest feelings of our nature. And we seem to have drawn a picture which is calculated equally to raise astonishment and delight, to produce the deepest reverence and yet the fullest confidence, when we have represented God as superintending whatever occurs in his infinite domain—guiding the roll of every planet, and the rush of every cataract, and the gathering of every cloud, and the motion of every will—and when, in order that the delineation may have all that exquisiteness which is only to be obtained from those home-touches which assure us that we have ourselves an interest in what is so splendid and surprising, we add, that he is with the sick man on his pallet, and with the seaman in his danger, and with the widow in her agony. And what, after all, is this combination but that presented by our text? If I would exhibit God as so attending to what is mighty as not to overlook what is mean, what better can I do than declare him mustering around him the vast army of suns and constellations, and all the while hearkening to every cry which goes up from an afflicted creation—and is not this the very picture sketched by the Psalmist, when, after the sublime ascription, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations," he adds the comforting words, "the Lord upholdeth all that fall, and lifteth up all those that be bowed down?"

We have only to add, that the doctrine of a particular and universal Providence, on which we have insisted, is strictly derivable from the very nature of God. We are so accustomed to reckon one thing great and another small, that when we ascend to contemplations of Deity, we are apt to forget that there is not to him that gradu-



ated scale which there must be to ourselves. It is to bring down God to the feebleness of our own estate, to suppose that what is great to us must be great to him, and that what is small to us must be small to him. I know and am persuaded, that, dwelling as God does in inaccessible splendors, a world is to him an atom, and an atom is to him a world. He can know nothing of the human distinctions between great and small—so that he is dishonored, not when all things are reckoned as alike subject to his inspections, but when some things are deemed important enough, and others too insignificant, to come within the notice of his providence. If he concern himself with the fate of an empire, but not with the fall of a sparrow, he must be a being scarce removed from equality with ourselves; for, if he have precisely the same scale by which to estimate importance, the range of his intelligence can be little wider than that of our own. God is that mysterious being, to whom the only great thing is himself. And, therefore, when "the eyes of all wait upon" him, the seraph gains not attention by his gaze of fire, and the insect loses it not through feebleness of vision—Archangel, and angel, and man, and beast, and fowl of the air, and fish of the sea, all draw equally the regards of him, who, counting nothing great but himself the Creator, can pass over, as small, no fraction of the creature. It is thus virtually the property of God, that he should care for every thing, and sustain every thing; so that we should never behold a blade of grass springing up from the earth, nor hear a bird warble its wild music, nor see an infant slumber on its mother's breast, without a warm memory that it is through God, as a God of providence, that the fields are enamelled in due season, that every animated tribe receives its sustenance, and that the successive generations of mankind arise, and flourish, and possess the earth. And never should we think of joy or sorrow, of things prosperous or adverse, of health or sickness, life or death, without devoutly believing that the times of every man are in the Almighty's hands; that nothing happens but through the ordinance or permission of God; and that the very same

Providence which guides the marchings of stars, and regulates the convulsions of empires, is tending at the couch of the afflicted, curtaining the sleep, and watching the toil, of the earth's remotest families.

We can only desire and pray, in conclusion, that this great truth might establish itself in all our hearts. Then would all undue anxieties be dismissed, our plans be those of prudence, our energies be rightly directed and strenuously employed, disappointments would be avoided, and hope would never make ashamed; for we should leave every thing, small as well as great, in the hands of Him who cannot be perplexed by multiplicity, nor overpowered by magnitude; and the result would be that we should enjoy a serenity, no more to be broken by those little cares which perpetually wrinkle the surface, than by those fierce storms which threaten the complete shipwreck of peace.

And forasmuch as we have spoken of Redemption as well as of Providence, and are now telling you of security and serenity, suffer that we remind you of the simile by which St. Paul has represented christian hope: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail." The anchor is cast "within the vail," whither Christ the forerunner is gone before. And if hope be fixed upon Christ, the Rock of Ages, a rock rent, if we may use the expression, on purpose that there might be a holding-place for the anchors of a perishing world, it may well come to pass that we enjoy a calm as we journey through life, and draw near the grave. But since "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid," if our anchor rest not on this Rock, where is our hope, where our peacefulness? I know of a coming tempest—and would to God that the younger part, more especially, of this audience, might be stirred by its approach to repentance and righteousness! I know of a coming tempest, with which the Almighty shall shake terribly the earth; the sea and the waves roaring, and the stars falling from the heavens. Then shall there be a thousand shipwrecks, and immensity be strewed with the fragments of a stranded navy. Then

shall vessel upon vessel, laden with reason, and high intelligence, and noble faculty, be drifted to and fro, shattered and dismantled, and at last thrown on the shore as fuel for the burning. But there are ships which shall not founder in this battle and dissolution of the elements. There are ships which shall be in no peril whilst this, the last hurricane which is to sweep our creation, confounds earth, and sea, and sky; but which—when the fury is overpast, and the light of a morning which is to know no night breaks gloriously forth

—shall be found upon crystal and tranquil waters, resting beautifully on their shadows. These are those which have been anchored upon Christ. These are those—and may none refuse to join the number—who have trusted themselves to the Mediator, who humbled himself that he might lift up all those that are bowed down; and who have therefore interest in every promise made by Him, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and whose dominion endureth throughout all generations.

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## SERMON II.

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### THE TERMINATION OF THE MEDIATORIAL KINGDOM.

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“And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”—1 Corinthians, 15 : 28.

In our last discourse we spoke of an everlasting kingdom, and of a dominion which endureth throughout all generations. It will be of a kingdom which must terminate, though it appertain to a divine person, that we shall have to speak in expounding the words of our text.

There are two great truths presented by this verse and its context, each deserving attentive examination—the one, that Christ is now vested with a kingly authority which he must hereafter resign; the other, that, as a consequence on this resignation, God himself will become all in all to the universe. We proceed at once to the consideration of these truths; and begin by observing the importance of carefully distinguishing between what the Scriptures affirm of the attributes, and what of the offices, of the persons in the Trinity. In regard of the attributes, you will find that the employed lan-

guage marks perfect equality; the Father, Son, and Spirit, being alike spoken of as Eternal, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent. But in regard of the offices, there can be no dispute that the language indicates inequality, and that both the Son and Spirit are represented as inferior to the Father. This may readily be accounted for from the nature of the plan of redemption. This plan demanded that the Son should humble himself, and assume our nature; and that the Spirit should condescend to be sent as a renovating agent; whilst the Father was to remain in the sublimity and happiness of Godhead. And if such plan were undertaken and carried through, it seems unavoidable, that, in speaking of its several parts, the Son and the Spirit should be occasionally described as inferior to the Father. The offices being subordinate, the holders of those offices, though naturally equal, must



sometimes be exhibited as though one were superior to the others. At one time they may be spoken of with reference to their attributes, and then the language will mark perfect equality; at another, with reference to their offices, and then it will indicate a relative inferiority.

And it is only by thus distinguishing between the attributes and the offices, that we can satisfactorily explain our text and its context. The apostle expressly declares of Christ, that he is to deliver up his kingdom to the Father, and to become himself subject to the Father. And the question naturally proposes itself, how are statements such as these to be reconciled with other portions of Scripture, which speak of Christ as an everlasting King, and declare his dominion to be that which shall not be destroyed? There is no difficulty in reconciling these apparently conflicting assertions, if we consider Christ as spoken of in the one case as God, in the other as Mediator. If we believe him to be God, we know that he must be, in the largest sense, Sovereign of the universe, and that he can no more give up his dominion than change his nature. And then if we regard him as undertaking the office of Mediator between God and man, we must admit the likelihood that he would be invested, as holding this office, with an authority not necessarily permanent, which would last indeed as long as the office, but cease if there ever came a period when the office would itself be abolished. So that there is no cause for surprise, nothing which should go to the persuading us that Christ is not God, if we find the Son described as surrendering his kingdom: we have only to suppose him then spoken of as Mediator, and to examine whether there be not a mediatorial kingdom, which, committed to Christ, has at length to be resigned.

And you cannot be acquainted with the scheme of our Redemption, and not know that the office of Mediator warrants our supposing a kingdom which will be finally surrendered. The grand design of Redemption has all along been the exterminating evil from the universe, and the restoring harmony throughout God's disorganized empire. We know that God made every

thing good, and that the creation, whether animate or inanimate, as it rose from his hands, presented no trace of imperfection or pollution. But evil mysteriously gained entrance, and, originating in heaven, spread rapidly to earth. And henceforwards it was the main purpose of the Almighty to counteract evil, to obliterate the stains from his workmanship, and to reinstate and confirm the universe in its original purity. To effect this purpose, his own Son, equal to himself in all the attributes of Godhead, undertook to assume human nature; and to accomplish, in working out the reconciliation of an alienated tribe, results which should extend themselves to every department of creation. He was not indeed fully and visibly invested with the kingly office, until after his death and resurrection; for then it was that he declared to his disciples, "all power is given unto me in heaven and earth." Nevertheless the Mediatorial kingdom had commenced with the commencement of human guilt and misery. For, so soon as man rebelled, Christ interfered on his behalf, and assumed the office of his surety and deliverer. He undertook the combat with the powers of evil, and fought his first battle. And afterwards all God's intercourse with the world was carried on through the Mediator—Christ appearing in human form to patriarchs and saints, and superintending the concerns of our race with distinct reference to the good of his church.

But when, through death, he had destroyed "him that had the power of death," the Mediator became emphatically a king. He "ascended up on high, and led captivity captive," in that very nature in which he had "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." He sat down at the right hand of God, the very person that had been made a curse for us; and there was "given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." And ever since he hath been "head over all things to the church;" and God has so delegated his power to the Mediator, that this Mediator has "the keys of hell and of death," and so rules human affairs as to make

way for a grand consummation which creation yet expects. It is certainly the representation of Scripture, that Christ has been exalted to a throne, in recompense of his humiliation and suffering; and that, seated on this throne, he governs all things in heaven and earth. And we call this throne the mediatorial throne, because it was only as Mediator that Christ could be exalted; because, possessing essentially all power as God, it could only be as God-man that he was vested with dominion. "He must reign," saith St. Paul, "until he hath put all enemies under his feet." The great object for which the kingdom has been erected, is, that he who occupies the throne may subdue those principalities and powers which have set themselves against the government of God. Already have vast advances been made towards the subjugation. But the kingdoms of the world have not yet become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. Sin still reigns, and death still reigns, and only an inconsiderable fraction of the human population bow to the sceptre of Jesus. But we are taught to expect a thorough and stupendous change. We know from prophecy that a time approaches when the whole world shall be evangelized; when there shall not be the tribe, no, nor the individual upon earth, who fails to love and reverence the Mediator. Christ hath yet to set up his kingdom on the wreck of all human sovereignty, and so to display himself that he shall be universally adored as "King of kings and Lord of lords."

And when this noble result is brought round, and the whole globe mantled with righteousness, there will yet remain much to be done ere the mediatorial work is complete. The throne must be set for judgment; the enactments of a retributive economy take effect; the dead be raised, and all men receive the things done in the body. Then will evil be finally expelled from the universe, and God may again look forth on his unlimited empire, and declare it not defiled by a solitary stain. Then will be "the restitution of all things." Then will it be evident that the power committed to Christ has accomplished the great ends for which it was entrusted, the overthrow of Satan,

the destruction of death, and the extirpation of unrighteousness. And if it be the declaration of Scripture that the Mediator shall thus at length master evil under its every form, and in its every consequence, will not this Mediator finally prove himself a king—demonstrating not only the possession of sovereignty, but the employment of it to those illustrious purposes which were proposed by God from the foundation of the world? Yes, we can say with St. Paul, "we see not yet all things put under him." But we see enough to assure us that "him hath God exalted as a Prince and a Savior." We see enough, and we know enough, to be persuaded, that there is kingdom within kingdom; and that, whilst God is still the universal Monarch, the Omnipotent who "tellecth the number of the stars," and without whom not even a sparrow falls, the Mediator superintends and regulates the affairs of his church, and orders, with absolute sway, whatever respects the final establishment of righteousness through creation. And therefore are we also persuaded, on the testimony which cannot deceive, that this Mediator shall reign till he hath brought into subjection every adversary of God; and that at last—death itself being swallowed up in victory—the universe, purged from all pollution, and glowing with a richer than its pristine beauty, shall be the evidence that there hath indeed been a mediatorial kingdom, and that nothing could withstand the Mediator's sovereignty.

Now it has been our object, up to this point of our discourse, to prove to you, on scriptural authority, that the Mediator is a king, and that Christ, as God-man, is invested with a dominion not to be confounded with that which belongs to him as God. You are now therefore prepared for the question, whether Christ have not a kingdom which must be ultimately resigned. We think it evident that, as Mediator, Christ has certain functions to discharge, which, from their very nature, cannot be eternal. When the last of God's elect family shall have been gathered in, there will be none to need the blood of sprinkling, none to require the intercession of "an advocate with the Father." And when the last enemy, which is death,



shall have been destroyed, that great purpose of the Almighty—the conquest of Satan, and the extirpation of evil, will be accomplished; so that there will be no more battles for the Mediator to fight, no more adversaries to subdue. And thus, if we have rightly described the mediatorial kingdom, there is to come a time when it will be no longer necessary; when, every object for which it was erected having been fully and finally attained, and no possibility existing that evil may re-enter the universe, this kingdom may be expected to cease.

And this is the great consummation which we are taught by our text and its context to expect. We may not be able to explain its details, but the outlines are sketched with boldness and precision. There has been committed to Christ, not as God, but as God-man, a kingdom which, though small in its beginning, shall at length supersede every other. The designs proposed in the erection of this kingdom, are the salvation of man and the glory of God, in the thorough extirpation of evil from the universe. These designs will be fully accomplished at the general judgment; and then, the ends for which the kingdom was erected having been answered, the kingdom itself is to terminate. Then shall the Son of man, having "put down all rule and all authority and power," lay aside the sceptre of majesty, and take openly a place subordinate to Deity. Then shall all that sovereignty which, for magnificent but temporary purposes, has been wielded by and through the humanity of Christ, pass again to the Godhead whence it was derived. Then shall the Creator, acting no longer through the instrumentality of a mediator, assume visibly, amid the worshippings of the whole intelligent creation, the dominion over his infinite and now purified empire, and administer its every concern without the intervention of one "found in fashion as a man." And then, though as head of his church, Christ, in human nature, may always retain a special power over his people, and though, as essentially divine, he must at all times be equally the omnipotent, there will necessarily be such a change in the visible government of the universe, that the Son shall seem to sur-

render all kingly authority; to descend from his throne, having made his enemies his footstool, and take his station amongst those who obey rather than rule; and thus shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "the Son also himself shall be subject unto him that put all things under him;" and God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, "God shall henceforwards be all in all."

Now it is upon this latter expression, indicative as it is of what we may call the universal diffusion of Deity, that we design to employ the remainder of our time. We wish to examine into the truths involved in the assertion, that God is to be finally all in all. It is an assertion which, the more it is pondered, the more august and comprehensive will it appear. You may remember that the same expression is used of Christ in the Epistle to the Colossians—"Christ is all and in all." There is no disagreement between the assertions. In the Epistle to the Colossians St. Paul speaks of what takes place under the mediatorial kingdom; whereas in that to the Corinthians, he describes what will occur when that kingdom shall have terminated. At present, whatever in the divine government has reference to this earth and its inhabitants, is not transacted immediately by God, but mediately through an Intercessor, so that Christ is all in all. But hereafter, the mediatorial office finally ceasing, the administration, we are assured, will be immediately with God, and therefore will God be all in all.

We learn then from the expression in question, however unable we may be to explain the amazing transition, that there is to be a removal of the apparatus constructed for allowing us communications with Godhead; and that we shall not need those offices of an Intercessor, without which there could now be no access to our Maker. There is something very grand and animating in this announcement. If we were unfallen creatures, we should need no Mediator. We might, as did Adam, approach at once the Creator, and, though awed by his majesty, have no fears as to our reception, and experience no repulse. And therefore, whilst we heartily thank God for the unspeakable gift of his Son, we cannot

but feel, that, so long as we have no access to him except through a Mediator, we have not altogether recovered our forfeited privileges. The mediatorial office, independently on which we must have been everlastingly outcasts, is evidence, throughout the whole of its continuance, that the human race does not yet occupy the place whence it fell. But with the termination of this office shall be the admission of man into all the privileges of direct access to his Maker. Then shall he see face to face; then shall he know even as also he is known. There are yet, and there must be, whilst God's dealings with humanity are carried on through a Mediator, separating distances between our race and the Creator, which exist not in regard of other orders of being. But the descent of the Son from the throne, to which he was exalted in recompense of his sufferings, shall be the unfolding to man the presence-chamber in which Deity unveils his effulgence. In ceasing to have a Mediator, the last barrier is taken down; and man, who had thrown himself to an unmeasured distance from God, passes into those direct associations with Him "that inhabiteth eternity," which can be granted to none but those who never fell, or who, having fallen, have been recovered from every consequence of apostasy.

And therefore, it is not that we depreciate, or undervalue, the blessedness of that condition in which Christ is all in all to his church. We cannot compute this blessedness, and we feel that the best praises fall far short of its deserts; and yet we can believe of this blessedness, that it is only preparatory to a richer and a higher. Whilst overwhelmed with the consciousness that I owe every thing to a Mediator, I can yet feel that this Mediator must lay aside his office as no longer necessary, ere I can stand in that relationship to Deity, and possess that freedom of approach, which belong to the loftiest and holiest in creation. To tell me that I should need a Mediator through eternity, were to tell me that I should be in danger of death, and at a distance from God. And, therefore, in informing me of the extinction of that sovereignty by which alone I can be rescued, you inform me of the restoration of all which Adam lost, and of the

placing humankind on equality with angels. It is not then, we again say, that we are insensible to benefits, overpassing all thought, which we derive from the mediatorial kingdom; it is only because we know that this kingdom is but introductory to another, and that the perfection of happiness must require our admission into direct intercourse with our Maker—it is only on these accounts that we anticipate with delight the giving up of the kingdom to the Father, and associate whatever is most gladdening and glorious with the truth, that God, rather than Christ, shall be all in all through eternity.

But there are other thoughts suggested by the fact, that God himself shall be all in all. We have hitherto considered the expression as simply denoting that men will no longer approach God through a Mediator, and that their happiness will be vastly augmented by their obtaining the privilege of direct access. There is, however, no reason for supposing that the human race alone will be affected by the resignation of the mediatorial kingdom. We may not believe that it is only over ourselves that Christ Jesus has been invested with sovereignty. It would rather appear, since all power has been given him in heaven and earth, that the mediatorial kingdom embraces different worlds, and different orders of intelligence; and that the chief affairs of the universe are administered by Christ in his glorified humanity. It is therefore possible that even unto angels the Godhead does not now immediately manifest itself; but that these glorious creatures are governed, like ourselves, through the instrumentality of the Mediator. Hence it will be a great transition to the whole intelligent creation, and not merely to an inconsiderable fraction, when the Son shall give up the kingdom to the Father. It will be the visible enthronement of Deity. The Creator will come forth from his sublime solitude, and assume the sceptre of his boundless empire. It will be a new and overwhelming manifestation of Divinity—another fold of the veil, which must always hang between the created and the uncreated, will have been removed; and the thousand times



ten thousand spirits which throng immensity, shall behold with a clear vision, and know with an ampler knowledge, the Eternal One at whose word they rose into being.

And it is not, we think, possible to give a finer description of universal harmony and happiness, than is contained in the sentence, "God all in all," when supposed to have reference to every rank in creation. Let us consider for a moment what the sentence implies. It implies that there shall be but one mind, and that the Divine mind, throughout the universe. Every creature shall be so actuated by Deity, that the Creator shall have only to will, and the whole mass of intelligent being will be conscious of the same wish, and the same purpose. It is not merely that every creature will be under the government of the Creator, as a subject is under that of his prince. It is not merely that to every command of Deity there will be yielded an instant and cheerful obedience, in every department, and by every inhabitant of the universe. It is more than all this. It is that there shall be such fibres of association between the Creator and the creatures—God shall be so wound up, if the expression be lawful, with all intelligent being—that every other will shall move simultaneously with the divine, and the resolve of Deity be instantly felt as one mighty impulse pervading the vast expansion of mind. God all in all—it is that from the highest order to the lowest, archangel, and angel, and man, and principality, and power, there shall be but one desire, one object; so that to every motion of the eternal Spirit there will be a corresponding in each element of the intellectual creation, as though there were throughout but one soul, one animating, actuating, energizing principle. God all in all. I know not how to describe the harmony which the expression seems to indicate. This gathering of the Creator into every creature; this making each mind in the world of spirit a sort of centre of Deity, from which flow the high decisions of divine sovereignty, so that, in all its amplitude, the intellectual creation seems to witness that God is equally every where, and serves as one grand instrument which, at

every point and in every spring, is instinct with the very thought of Him who "ordereth all things in heaven and earth"—oh, this immeasurably transcends the mere reduction of all systems, and all beings, into a delighted and uniform obedience. This is making God more than the universal Ruler: it is making him the universal Actuator. And you might tell me of tribe upon tribe of magnificent creatures, waiting to execute the commandments of God; you might delineate the very tenant of every spot in immensity, bowing to one sceptre, and burning with one desire, and living for one end—but indeed the most labored and high-wrought description of the universal prevalence of concord, yields unspeakably to the simple announcement, that there shall be but one spirit, one pulse, through creation; and thought itself is distanced, when we hear, that after the Son shall have surrendered his kingdom to the Father, God himself shall be all in all to the universe.

But if the expression mark the harmony, it marks also the happiness of eternity. It is undeniable, that, even whilst on earth, we find things more beautiful and precious in proportion as we are accustomed to find God in them, to view them as gifts, and to love them for the sake of the giver. It is not the poet, nor the naturalist, who has the richest enjoyment when surveying the landscape, or tracing the manifestations of creative power and contrivance. It is the christian, who recognizes a Father's hand in the glorious development of mountain and valley, and discovers the loving-kindness of an ever-watchful guardian in each example of the adaptation of the earth to its inhabitants. No man has such pleasure in any of those objects which answer to the various affections of his nature, as the man who is accustomed to the seeing God in them. And then only is the creature loved, not merely with a lawful, but with an elevated and ennobling love, when regarded as bestowed on us by the Creator, and wearing the impress of the benevolence of Deity.

What will it be when God shall be literally all in all? It were little to tell us, that, admitted into the heavenly

Jerusalem, we should worship in a temple magnificent in architecture, and bow down at a shrine, whence flashed the effulgence and issued the voice of Jehovah. The mighty and overwhelming thing is, that, according to the vision of St. John, there shall be no temple there; but that so actually shall God be all; that Deity itself will be our sanctuary, and our adorations be rendered in the sublime recesses of the Omnipotent himself. It were little to assure us that the everlasting dwelling-place of the saints shall be irradiated by luminaries a thousand-fold more splendid and gorgeous than walk the firmament of a fallen creation. The animated intelligence is, that there shall be "no need of the sun, neither of the moon;" that God shall be all, and the shinings of Divinity light up the scenery over which we shall expatiate.

And if we think on future intercourse with beings of our own race, or of loftier ranks, then only are the anticipations rapturous and inspiring, when Deity seems blended with every association. I know how frequently, when death has made an inroad on a household, the thoughts of survivors follow the buried one into the invisible state; and with what fervency and fondness they dwell on re-union in a world where partings are unknown. And never let a syllable be breathed which would throw suspicion on a tenet commending itself so exquisitely to the best sympathies of our nature, or take away from mourners the consolatory belief, that, in the land of the promised inheritance, the parent shall know the child whom he followed heart-broken to the grave, and the child the parent who left him in all the loneliness of orphanage, and the husband the wife, or the wife the husband, whose removal threw a blight on all the happiness of home. But how can it come to pass that there will be any thing like the renewal of human associations, and yet future happiness be of that exalted and unearthly character, which has nothing common with the contracted feelings here engaged by a solitary family? We reply at once that God is to be all in all. The child may be again loved and embraced. But the emotions will have none of that selfishness into which the

purest and deepest of our feelings may now be too much resolved: it will be God that the child loves in the parent, and it will be God that the parent loves in the child; and the gladness with which the heart of each swells, as they recognize one the other in the celestial city, will be a gladness of which Deity is the spring, a gladness of which Deity is the object.

Thus shall it be also in regard of every element which can be supposed to enter into future happiness. It is certain, that, if God be all in all, there will be excited in us no wish which we shall be required to repress, none which shall not be gratified so soon as formed. Having God in ourselves, we shall have capacities of enjoyment immeasurably larger than at present; having God in all around us, we shall find every where material of enjoyment commensurate with our amplified powers. Let us put from us confused and indeterminate notions of happiness, and the simple description, that God shall be all in all, sets before us the very perfection of felicity. The only sound definition of happiness is that every faculty has its proper object. And we believe of man, that God endowed him with various capacities, intending to be himself their supply. Man indeed revolted from God, and has ever since endeavored, though ever disappointed, to fill his capacities with other objects than God. But may not God hereafter, having rectified the disorders of humanity, be himself the object of our every faculty? I know not why we may not suppose that not only the works of God, which now manifest his qualities, but the qualities themselves, as they subsist without measure in the ever-living Creator, will become the immediate objects of contemplation. "What an object," says Bishop Butler, "is the universe to a creature, if there be a creature who can comprehend its system. But it must be an infinitely higher exercise of the understanding, to view the scheme of it in that mind which projected it, before its foundations were laid. And surely we have meaning to the words when we speak of going further, and viewing, not only this system in his mind, but the very wisdom, intelligence, and power from which it proceeded." And yet more, as the pre-



late goes on to argue. Wisdom, intelligence, and power, are not God, though God is an infinitely wise being, and intelligent, and powerful. So that to contemplate the effects of wisdom must be an inferior thing to the contemplating wisdom in itself—for the cause must be always a higher object to the mind than the effect—and the contemplating wisdom in itself must be an inferior thing to the contemplating the divine nature; for wisdom is but an attribute of the nature, and not the nature itself.

Thus, at present, we make little or no approach towards knowing God as he is, because God hath not yet made himself all in all to his creatures. But let there once come this universal diffusion of Deity, and we may find in God himself the objects which answer to our matured and spiritualized faculties. We profess not to be competent to the understanding the mysterious change which is thus indicated as passing on the universe. But we can perceive it to be a change which shall be full of glory, full of happiness. We shall be as sensible of the presence of God, as we now are of the presence of a friend, when he is standing by us, and conversing with us. "And what will be the joy of heart which his presence will inspire good men with, when they shall have a sensation that he is the sustainer of their being, that they exist in him; when they shall feel his influence cheering, and enlivening, and supporting their frame, in a manner of which we have now no conception?" He will be, in a literal sense, their strength and their portion for ever.

Thus we look forward to the termination of the mediatorial kingdom, as the event with which stands associated our reaching the summit of our felicity. There is then to be a removal of all that is now intermediate in our communications with Deity, and the substitution of God himself for the objects which he has now adapted to the giving us delight. God himself will be an object to our faculties; God himself will be our happiness. And as we travel from one spot to another of the universe, and enter into companionship with different sections of its rejoicing population, every where we shall carry Deity with us, and every where find Deity—not as now, when faith must all

along do battle with sense, but in manifestations so immediate, so direct, so adapted to our faculties of perception, that we shall literally see God, and be in contact with God; and oh then, if thought recur to the days of probation, when all that concerns us was administered through a Mediator, we shall feel that whatever is most illustrious in dignity, whatever most rapturous in enjoyment, was promised in the prophetic announcement, that, when the Son shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, God himself shall be all in all.

We can only add that it becomes us to examine whether we are now subjects of the mediatorial kingdom, or whether we are of those who will not that Christ should reign over them. If God is hereafter to be all in all, it behoves us to inquire what he is to us now? Can we say with the Psalmist, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee?" How vain must be our hope of entering into heaven, if we have no present delight in what are said to be its joys. A christian finds his happiness in holiness. And therefore, when he looks forward to heaven, it is the holiness of the scene, and association, on which he fastens as affording the happiness. He is not in love with an Arcadian paradise, with the green pastures, and the flowing waters, and the minstrelsy of many harpers. He is not dreaming of a bright island, where he shall meet buried kinsfolk, and, renewing domestic charities, live human life again in all but its cares, and tears, and partings. "Be ye holy, for I am holy"—this is the precept, attempted conformity to which is the business of a christian's life, perfect conformity to which shall be the blessedness of heaven. Let us therefore take heed that we deceive not ourselves. The apostle speaks of "tasting the powers of the world to come," as though heaven were to begin on this side the grave. We may be enamored of heaven, because we think that "there the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." We may be enchanted with the poetry of its descriptions, and fascinated by the brilliancy of its colorings, as the Evangelist John relates his visions, and sketches the scenery on

which he was privileged to gaze. But all this does not prove us on the high road to heaven. Again we say, that, if it be heaven towards which we journey, it will be holiness in which we delight: for if we cannot now rejoice in having God for our portion, where is our meetness for a world in which God is to be all in all for ever and for ever?

## SERMON III.

### THE ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM THE POSSESSION OF THE SCRIPTURES.\*

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."—Rom. 3 : 1, 2.

We think it unnecessary either to examine the general argument with which St. Paul was engaged when he penned these words, or to interpret the passage with reference to the Jew rather than to ourselves. It is quite evident that the force of the verses is independent on the general argument, and must have been increased rather than diminished, as additions were made to the amount of Revelation. It was objected to the apostle that he represented Jew and Gentile as all along on the same level; but he felt that the objection was removed by reminding his opponent that the Jew had, and the Gentile had not, the sacred Scriptures. He reckoned it sufficient proof that an unmeasured advantage had lain with the chosen people, that "unto them had been committed the oracles of God."

This is a high testimony to the worth of the Bible, and deserves to be examined with the greatest attention. Of course, if the possession of but a few inspired writings gave the Jew a vast superiority over the Gentile, the possession of a volume, containing the

whole of revelation, must be attended with yet greater privileges. It should, however, be observed, that the apostle seems to refer to more than the mere possession of the Bible; the expression which he employs marks out the Jews as the depository of revelation. "Chiefly because that unto them were committed, or intrusted, the oracles of God." There may be here an intimation, that those who have the Bible are to be regarded as stewards, just as are those who have large earthly possessions. If this be correct, there are two points of view under which it will be our business to endeavor to set before you the advantageousness of possessing God's oracles. We must show that the Bible is profitable to a nation, in the first place, because that nation may be improved by its contents; in the second place, because that nation may impart them to others.

Now it may appear so trite and acknowledged a truth, that a people is advantaged by possessing the Bible, that it were but wasting time to spend much on its exhibition. We are not, however, prepared to admit that the worth of the Bible is generally allowed, or adequately estimated; so that,

\* A collection was made after this Sermon in support of the Old Charity Schools.



even before such an audience as the present, we would enlarge on the advantages which result to a nation from possessing God's oracles.

We take at first the lowest ground ; for many who acknowledge gratefully the worth of Holy Writ, when man is viewed relatively to an after state of being, seem little conscious of the blessings derived from it, when he is regarded merely in reference to this earth. It were no over-bold opinion, that, if the Bible were not the word of God, and could be proved to be not the word of God, it would nevertheless be the most precious of books, and do immeasurably more for a land than the finest productions of literature and philosophy. We always recur with great delight to the testimony of a deist, who, after publicly laboring to disprove christianity, and to bring Scripture into contempt as a forgery, was found instructing his child from the pages of the New Testament. When taxed with the flagrant inconsistency, his only reply was, that it was necessary to teach the child morality, and that nowhere was there to be found such morality as in the Bible. We thank the deist for the confession. Whatever our scorn of a man who could be guilty of so foul a dishonesty, seeking to sweep from the earth a volume to which, all the while, himself recurred for the principles of education, we thank him for his testimony, that the morality of Scripture is a morality not elsewhere to be found ; so that, if there were no Bible, there would be comparatively no source of instruction in duties and virtues, whose neglect and decline would dislocate the happiness of human society. The deist was right. Deny or disprove the divine origin of Scripture, and nevertheless you must keep the volume as a kind of text-book of morality, if indeed you would not wish the banishment from our homes of all that is lovely and sacred, and the breaking up, through the lawlessness of ungovernable passions, of the quiet and the beauty which are yet round our families.

It is a mighty benefit, invariably produced where the Bible makes way—the heightened tone of morals, and the introduction of principles essential to the stability of government, and the well-

being of households. We admit indeed that this benefit could be but partially wrought, if the Bible were received as only a human composition. We do not exactly see how the deist was to enforce on his child the practice of what Scripture enjoined, if he denied to that Scripture the authority drawn from the being God's word. Yet it is not to be doubted, that, even where there is but little regard to the divine origin of the Bible, the book wields no inconsiderable sway ; so that numbers, who care nothing for it as a revelation from God, are unconsciously influenced by it in every department of conduct. The deist, though he reject revelation, and treat it as a fable, is not what he would have been, had there been no revelation. As a member of society, he has been fashioned and cast into the mould of the Bible, however vehement in his wish to exterminate the Bible. It is because the Bible has gained footing in the land where he dwells, and drawn a new boundary-line between what is base and what honorable, what unworthy of rational beings and what excellent and of good report, that he has learned to prize virtues and shun vices which respectively promote and impede the happiness of families and the greatness of communities. He is therefore the ungracious spectacle of a being elevated by that which he derides, ennobled by that on which he throws ridicule, and indebted for all on which he prides himself to that which he pronounces unworthy his regard.

And if it be thus certain—certain on the confession of its enemies—that a pure and high morality is to be gathered only from the pages of the Bible, what an advantage is there in the possession of the Scriptures, even if death were the termination of human existence. Take away the Bible from a nation, so that there should no longer be the exhibition and inculcation of its precepts, and there would be a gradual, yea, and a rapid, introduction of false principles and spurious theories, which would pave the way for a total degeneracy of manners. You would quickly find that honesty and integrity were not held in their former repute, but had given place to fraud and extortion ; that there was an universal setting up of an idol of selfish-

ness, before which all that is generous, and disinterested, and philanthropic, would be forced to do homage; that there was attached little or none of that sacredness to domestic relationships which had heretofore been the chief charm of families; and that there was departing from our institutions all that is glorious in liberty, and from our firesides all that gives them their attractiveness. Whatever had been introduced and matured by the operations of christianity, would, in process of time, decay and disappear, were those operations suspended; and since we can confidently trace to the influences of true religion, our advancement in all that concerns the public security, and the private tranquillity; we can with equal confidence affirm our speedy relapse, if these influences were suddenly withdrawn. And therefore do we feel that we give an exaggerated statement, when we describe the possession of the Bible as the possession of a talisman, by which the worst forms of evil are averted from a land, and the best and purest blessings shrined in its households.

We are never afraid to ascribe to the prevalence of true religion, that unmeasured superiority in all the dignities and decencies of life, which distinguish a christian nation as compared with a heathen. We ascribe it to nothing but acquaintance with the revealed will of God, that those kingdoms of the earth, which bow at the name of Jesus, have vastly outstripped in civilization every other, whether ancient or modern, which may be designated pagan and idolatrous. If you search for the full developement of the principles of civil liberty, for the security of property, for an evenhanded justice, for the rebuke of gross vices, for the cultivation of social virtues, and for the diffusion of a generous care of the suffering, you must turn to lands where the cross has been erected—as though christianity were identified with what is fine in policy, lofty in morals, and permanent in greatness. Yea, as though the Bible were a mighty volume, containing whatever is requisite for correcting the disorders of states and cementing the happiness of families, you find that the causing it to be received and read by

a people, is tantamount to the producing a thorough revolution—a revolution including equally the palace and the cottage—so that every rank in society, as though there had been waved over it the wand of the magician, is mysteriously elevated, and furnished with new elements of dignity and comfort. Who then will refuse to confess, that, even if regard were had to nothing beyond the present narrow scene, there is no gift comparable to that of the Bible; and that consequently, though a nation might throw away, as did the Jewish, the greatest of their privileges, and fail to grasp the immortality set before them in the revelation intrusted to their keeping, there would yet be proof enough of their having possessed a vast advantage over others, in the fact adduced by St. Paul in our text, that “unto them had been committed the oracles of God?”

We would further observe that we stand indebted to the Bible for much of intellectual as well as moral advantage. Indeed the two go together. Where there is great moral, there will commonly be great mental degradation; and the intellect has no fair play, whilst the man is under the dominion of vice. It is certainly to be observed, that, in becoming a religious man, an individual seems to gain a wider comprehension, and a sounder judgment; as though, in turning to God, he had sprung to a higher grade in intelligence. It would mark a weak, or at least an uninformed mind, to look with contempt on the Bible, as though beneath the notice of a man of high power and pursuit. He who is not spiritually, will be intellectually benefited by the study of Scripture; and we would match the sacred volume against every other, when the object proposed in the perusal is the strengthening the understanding by contact with lofty truth, or refining the taste by acquaintance with exquisite beauty. And of course the intellectual benefit is greatly heightened, if accompanied by a spiritual. Man becomes in the largest sense “a new creature,” when you once waken the dormant immortality. It is not, of course, that there is communicated any fresh set of mental powers; but there is removed all



that weight and oppression which ignorance and viciousness lay upon the brain. And what is true of an individual is true, in its degree, of a nation; the diffusion of christian knowledge being always attended by diffusion of correct views in other departments of truth, so that, in proportion as a peasantry is christianized, you will find it more inquiring and intelligent.

And there is no cause for surprise in the fact, that intellectual benefits are conferred by the Bible. It is to be remembered that we are indebted to the Bible for all our knowledge of the early history of the world, of the creation of man, and of his first condition and actions. Remove the Bible, and we are left to conjecture and fable, and to that enfeebling of the understanding which error almost necessarily produces. Having no authentic account of the origin of all things, we should bewilder ourselves with theories which would hamper our every inquiry; and the mind, perplexed and baffled at the outset, would never expand freely in its after investigations. We should have confused apprehensions of some unknown powers on which we depended, peopling the heavens with various deities, and subjecting ourselves to the tyrannies of superstition. And it is scarcely to be disputed, that there is, in every respect, a debasing tendency in superstition; and that, if we imagined the universe around us full of rival and antagonist gods, in place of knowing it under the dominion of one mighty First Cause, we should enter at a vast disadvantage on the scrutiny of the wonders by which we are surrounded; the intellect being clouded by the mists of moral darkness, and all nature overcast through want of knowledge of its author.

The astronomer may have been guided, however unconsciously, by the Bible, as he has pushed his discoveries across the broad fields of space. Why is it that the chief secrets of nature have been penetrated only in christian times, and in christian lands; and that men, whose names are first in the roll on which science emblazons her achievements, have been men on whom fell the rich light of revelation? We pretend not to say that it was revelation which directly taught them how

to trace the motions of stars, and laid open to their gaze mysteries which had heretofore baffled man's sagacity. But we believe, that, just because their lot was cast in days, and in scenes, when and where the Bible had been received as God's word, their intellect had freer play than it would otherwise have had, and their mind went to its work with greater vigor, and less impediment. We believe that he who sets himself to investigate the revolutions of planets, knowing thoroughly beforehand who made those planets and governs their motions, would be incalculably more likely to reach some great discovery, than another who starts in utter ignorance of the truths of creation, and ascribes the planets to chance, or some unintelligible agency. And it is nothing against this opinion, that some who have been eminent by scientific discoveries, have been notorious for rejection of christianity and opposition to the Bible. Let them have been even atheists—they have been atheists, not in a land of atheists, but in a land of worshippers of the one true God; and our conviction is, that, had they been atheists in a land of atheists, they would never have so signalized themselves by scientific discovery. It has been through living, as it were, in an atmosphere of truth, however they themselves have imbibed error, that they have gained that elasticity of powers which has enabled them to rise into unexplored regions. They have not been ignorant of the truths of the Bible, however they may have repudiated the Bible; and these truths have told on all their faculties, freeing them from trammels, and invigorating them for labor; so that very possibly the eminence which they have reached, and where they rest with so much pride, would have been as inaccessible to themselves as to the gifted inquirers of heathen times, had not the despised Gospel pioneered the way, and the rejected Scriptures unfettered their understandings.

We are thus to the full as persuaded of the intellectual, as of the moral benefits produced by the Bible. We reckon, that, in giving the inspired volume to a nation, you give it that which shall cause its mental powers to expand, as well as that which shall rectify exist-

ing disorders. And if you would account for the superiority of christian over heathen lands in what is intellectually great, in philosophy, and science, and the stretch and the grasp of knowledge, you may find the producing causes in the possession of the Scriptures—yea, and men may come with all the bravery of a boastful erudition, and demand admiration of the might of the human mind, as it seems to subjugate the universe, counting the heavenly hosts, and tracking comets as they sweep along where the eye cannot follow; but so well-assured are we that it was revelation alone whose beams warmed what was dwarfish till it sprang into this vigor, that we explain the greater mental strength which a nation may display, on the principle "chiefly that unto them have been committed the oracles of God."

But if we can thus make good the advantageousness asserted in our text, when the reference is exclusively to the present scene of being, we shall have but little difficulty when we take higher ground. Is it nothing that a people may put from them the offer of immortality, and thus bring upon themselves at last a heavier condemnation, than could have overtaken them, had they never heard the Gospel. It would be for the final advantage of the individual who dies in impenitence and infidelity, that his spirit should perish like that of the brutes; but it will not, on this account, be contended that there was no blessing in his being born a man. In like manner, it cannot be argued, that there has been nothing profitable in the possession of the Scriptures, because the gift has been abused or neglected. We can say to those who as yet have drawn no spiritual benefit from the Bible, the opportunity is not gone; the Scriptures may still be searched, and life-giving doctrines derived from their statements. And is this no advantage? Is it no advantage, that salvation is brought within reach; and does it nullify the advantage, that men will not stretch forth the hand to lay hold?

And even if the mass of a nation, privileged with the Bible, have their portion at last with the unbelieving, it must not be forgotten, that there is in every age a remnant who trust in the Savior

whom that Bible reveals. The blessings which result from the possession of the Scriptures are not to be computed from what appears on the surface of society. There is a quiet under-current of happiness, which is generally unobserved, but which greatly swells the amount of good to be traced to the Bible. You must go into families, and see how burdens are lightened, and afflictions mitigated, by the promises of holy writ. You must follow men into their retirements, and learn how they gather strength, from the study of the sacred volume, for discharging the various duties of life. You must be with them in their struggles with poverty, and observe how contentment is engendered by the prospect of riches which cannot fade away. You must be with them on their death-beds, and mark how the gloom of the opening grave is scattered by a hope which is "full of immortality." And you must be with them—if indeed the spirit could be accompanied in its heavenward flight—as they enter the Divine presence, and prove, by taking possession of the inheritance which the Bible offers to believers, that they "have not followed cunningly devised fables." The sum of happiness conferred by revelation can never be known until God shall have laid open all secrets at the judgment. We must have access to the history of every individual, from his childhood up to his entering his everlasting rest, ere we have the elements from which to compute what christianity hath done for those who receive it into the heart. And if but one or two were gathered out from a people, as a result of conveying to that people the records of revelation, there would be, we may not doubt, such an amount of conferred benefit as would sufficiently prove the advantageousness of possessing the oracles of God.

It shall not be in vain that God hath sent the Bible to a nation, and caused the truths of christianity to be published within its borders. There may be what approximates to a general disregard of the Scriptures, and an universal rejection of the offers of salvation. Yet God hath his hidden ones who are delighting greatly in his testimonies. When Elijah complained that he stood alone in the service of his Maker, the



answer of God was, "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." We are therefore, at the best, poor judges of the way actually made by the Gospel, and of the influence which it wields, whilst we see nothing on all sides but a spreading degeneracy. When profligacy and infidelity are at their height, there may be many a roof beneath which is offered humble prayer through a Mediator, and many an eye which weeps in secret for dishonors done to God, and many a heart which beats high with expectation of the land, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Are we not then bound in all cases, when seeking full evidence that the Bible has been a blessing wheresoever imparted, to refer to the close of the dispensation, when Christ shall separate the tares from the wheat? Then will it be told to the universe, how a despised and overlooked company were "filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory," by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then will it be made manifest how the consolations of religion have pervaded many families, what anxieties they have soothed, what tears they have dried, what hopes they have communicated. Then will it be seen, that, over and above the intellectual and moral advantages which the Scriptures have conferred on those who never took them as their guide for eternity, spiritual advantages have been derived to others, who were stirred by their announcements from the lethargy of sin, and moved to flee for refuge to the cross of the Redeemer. Yea, and if it even came to pass that the great bulk of a people shrank away from the face of the Judge, beaten down by the consciousness that they had not trusted in him as the propitiation for their sins; yet would the few who were lifting up their heads with joy, be witnesses that revelation was the best boon which God could bestow on a land—witnesses by the wrath which the Bible had taught them to escape, witnesses by the glory it had instructed them to gain, that, in every case, and under all circumstances, it was a mighty advantage to a people, that "unto them had been committed the oracles of God."

But we observed that the expression

employed by the apostle, "chiefly because that unto them were committed, or intrusted the oracles of God," represents the Jews as stewards who should have dispensed the Bible, and who might themselves have been profited through conveying it to others. We are all aware that special promises are made in the Scriptures to those who shall be instrumental in turning many from darkness, and converting sinners from the error of their ways. We ordinarily apply these promises to individuals; and we expect them to be made good to the zealous minister, and the self-denying missionary. Undoubtedly the application is just; for we cannot question that those who have faithfully and successfully labored in winning souls to Christ, shall receive a portion of more than common brilliancy, when the Master comes to reckon with his servants. But we know not why these promises would not have been as applicable to communities as to individuals, had communities regarded God's oracles as a sacred deposit, and themselves as stewards who must give an account of their distribution. The earth has never yet presented the grand spectacle of what might be called a missionary nation, a people who felt that the true religion was held in trust for the benefit of the world, and who concentrated their energies on the being faithful in the stewardship. It cannot be said that the Jews did this, though, in spite of their frequent rebellions and lapses into idolatry, they were the leaven which prevented the complete decomposition of the world, and the light which alone relieved the ponderous moral darkness. It cannot be said that we ourselves have done this, whatever the efforts which have of late years been made for translating the Scriptures into the various languages, and conveying them to the various districts of the globe. There has been nothing which has approached to a national recognition, and a national acting on the recognition, that God hath made this land the depository of his word, in order that we might employ those resources, which an unlimited commerce places at our disposal, in diffusing that word over the enormous wastes of paganism. It is not by the endeavors and actions

of private individuals that the national stewardship can be faithfully discharged. A nation must act through its governors; and then only would the nation prove its sense, that the oracles of God had been deposited with it in order to distribution through the world, when its governors made the conversion of the heathen one great object for which they legislated and labored.

In this manner would a christian state occupy the same position amongst nations, as an affluent christian individual amongst the parishes and hamlets of a distressed neighborhood. Just as the individual counts it his business and privilege, to communicate of his temporal abundance to the inmates of surrounding cottages, so would the state count it its business and privilege to communicate of its spiritual abundance to the ignorant in surrounding territories. And however little ground there may be for a hope that any christian state will step forward, and take to itself the missionary character, we can be sure that the absence of all national effort to disseminate revelation is offensive in God's sight, and must sooner or later provoke retribution. The Bible is not given to a people exclusively for their own use. It is the food of the whole world, the volume from which whatever is human must draw the soul's sustenance. And no more right have a people to keep this book to themselves, whilst thousands in other lands are worn down by moral famine, than they would have to hoard the earth's fruits, if their own wants were supplied, and the cry of starving multitudes swept across the seas.

Neither would the faithful discharge of the stewardship be without its reward. Our text affirms it for the advantage of a people, that there have been deposited with them the oracles of God. We may conclude, therefore, that, in acting on the principle that the oracles are held in trust for the benefit of the world, a people would secure the recompense graciously annexed to the laboring to extend the kingdom of Christ. Who indeed that remembers that we live under an economy of strict retribution, and that nations can only be dealt with as nations on this side eternity, will see cause to doubt that the earnest discharge of what we call

the national stewardship, would be the best means of advancing and upholding the national greatness?

Who can believe of a people circumstanced like ourselves, that, in acting as stewards of the mysteries of God, we should erect a rampart against every enemy, and secure continued progress in all that makes a kingdom mighty. There are mixed up with the dealings of commerce the grandest purposes of God towards this fallen creation. Every country might have been its own store-house of every necessary and every luxury. It might have possessed within its own confines the productions of the whole globe, and thus have had but little motive to intercourse with other states. But, by diversifying his gifts, God hath made it for the profit of the world, that there should be constant interchange of property. Thus facilities are afforded for the communication of moral as well as physical advantages; and commerce may become the great propagator of christianity. And it strikes us as a beautiful arrangement, that it may have been with the express design of providing that the true religion should spread its branches over the world, that God caused the palm-tree, and the citron-tree, to grow in one land and not in another; and that, in order to bring the pearl of great price within reach of all, he may have given the gold to this district, and the diamond to that. And when the ocean is before us, dotted with vessels hastening to every quarter of the earth, or returning with the produce of far-off islands and continents, we look on a nobler spectacle than that of human ingenuity and hardihood triumphing over the elements, that wealth may be accumulated and appetite pampered—we are beholding the machinery through which God hath ordained that the sections of the human family should be kept knit together, and the preparations which he hath made for the diffusion of christianity, when the word shall be given, and "great shall be the company of the preachers." It has not therefore been without a view to the maintenance of truth and the spread of religion, that God hath given to this land the empire of the seas, and opened to it intercourse with every section of



the globe. We rather believe that we have been made great in commerce, that we might be great in the diffusion of knowledge. With our fleets on every sea, and unbounded wealth accumulated in our cities, there needs nothing but that, as a nation, we should feel our accountableness, and rapidly might the records of revelation make their way through the world. And if we were thus instrumental to the spread of the Gospel, thus faithful to our stewardship, it would not be foreign aggression, nor domestic insubordination, from which there would be danger to the land of our birth; there would be permanence in our might, because wielded in God's cause, and fixedness in our prosperity, because consecrated by piety. And as glory and greatness flowed in upon us, and the stewards of the Bible stood forth as the sovereigns of the world, other causes of the elevation might indeed be assigned by the politician and philosopher; but the true reason would be with those who should give in explanation, "Chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

I may here refer for a moment to that charitable cause for which I am directed to ask your support. It must be sufficient to remind you, intrusted as you are with the Bible, that there are hundreds of children in this town requiring to be educated in the principles of the Bible, and you will contribute liberally towards upholding the schools which now make their usual appeal to your bounty. There have been times when it was necessary to debate and demonstrate the duty of providing instruction for the children of the poor. Such times are gone. We have now no choice. He were as wise a man who should think to roll back the Atlantic, as he who would stay the advancing tide of intelligence which is pressing through the land. You cannot, if you would. And I do not believe there is one here who would lift a finger in so unrighteous an enterprise. Here, if any where, a man may glory in that general outstretching of the human mind which is characteristic of the times; and rejoice in the fact, that in knowledge, and mental development, the lower classes are following so close on the higher, that these latter

must go on with a vigorous stride, if they would not be quickly overtaken. It is not in such a seat of learning as this, that we shall find dislike to the spread of information. Knowledge is a generous and communicative thing, and jealousy at its progress is ordinarily the index of its wants. You would not, if you could, arrest the progress of education. But you may provide that the education shall be christian education. You may thus ensure that education shall be a blessing, not a curse; and save the land from being covered with that wildest and most unmanageable of all populations, a population mighty alike in intellect and ungodliness, a population that knows every thing but God, emancipated from all ignorance but that which is sure to breed the worst lawlessness, ignorance of the duties of the religion of Christ. An uneducated population may be degraded; a population educated, but not in righteousness, will be ungovernable. The one may be slaves, the other must be tyrants.

We have now only, in conclusion, to express an earnest hope that we may all learn, from the subject discussed, to set a higher value than ever on the Scriptures. Do we receive the Bible as "the oracles of God?" The Bible is as actually a divine communication as though its words came to us in the voice of the Almighty, mysteriously syllabled, and breathed from the firmament. What awe, what reverence, what prostration of soul, would attend the persuasion that such is the Bible; so that opening it is like entering the hallowed haunt of Deity, whence unearthly lips will breathe oracular responses. There needs nothing but an abiding conviction that Scripture remains, what it was at the first, the word of the living God—not merely a written thing, but a spoken; as such a message now as when originally delivered—and the volume will be perused, as it ought to be, in humility, yet in hope, with prayer, yet with confidence. And when God is regarded as always speaking to his creatures through the volume of revelation, there will be no marvel that, practically, this volume should be influential on the moral and mental, the temporal as well as eternal, interests of man. "The voice of the Lord," saith

the Psalmist, "is upon the waters; the voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire:" and well therefore may this voice correct the disorders of states, and fan the sparks of genius, as well as summon from the perishable, and guide to the immortal.

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## SERMON IV.

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### NEGLECT OF THE GOSPEL FOLLOWED BY ITS REMOVAL.

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"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."—Revelation, 2 : 5.

In our last discourse we endeavored to set before you the advantages resulting from the possession of God's oracles: the words which we have just read will lead us to speak of dangers produced by their neglect. The text contains an exhortation, and a threatening, with which we have evidently as great concern, as had the church of Ephesus to which they were originally addressed. The exhortation—an exhortation to repentance—is one which we shall do well to apply to ourselves; the threatening—a threatening that the candlestick shall be removed—may take effect in our own days as well as in earlier.

Now there are few duties to which men are more frequently urged, and in regard to which, nevertheless, they are more likely to be deceived, than the great duty of repentance. It is of the first importance, that the exact place and nature of this duty should be accurately defined; for so long as there is any thing of misapprehension, or mistake, in regard to repentance, there can be no full appreciation of the professed mercies of the Gospel. It seems to be too common an opinion, that repentance is a kind of preparation, or preliminary, which men are in a great degree to effect for themselves before

they can go to Christ as a mediator and propitiation. Repentance is regarded as a something which they have to do, a condition they have to perform, in order that they may be fitted to apply to the Redeemer, and ask a share in the blessings which he purchased for mankind. We do not, of course, deny that there must be repentance before there can be forgiveness; and that it is only to the broken and contrite heart that Christ extends the fruits of his passion. We say to every man who may be inquiring as to the pardon of sin, except you repent you cannot be forgiven. But the question is, whether a man must wait till he has repented before he applies to Christ; whether repentance is a preliminary which he has to effect, ere he may venture to seek to a mediator. And it is here, as we think, that the mistake lies, a mistake which turns repentance into a kind of obstacle between the sinner and Christ.

The scriptural doctrine in regard to repentance is not, that a man must repent in order to his being qualified to go to Christ; it is rather, that he must go to Christ in order to his being enabled to repent. And the difference between these propositions is manifest and fundamental. There would be no



virtue in our repentance, even if we could repent of ourselves, to recommend us to the favor of the Redeemer; but there goes forth virtue from the Redeemer himself, strengthening us for that repentance which is alone genuine and acceptable. St. Peter sufficiently laid down this doctrine, when he said of Christ to the high priest and Sadducees, "him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Here repentance is stated to be as much the gift of the glorified Christ as forgiveness—a statement inconsistent with the notion, that repentance is something which must be effected without Christ, as a ground on which to rest our application to him for pardon. We rather gather from these words of the apostle, that we can no more repent without Christ than be pardoned without Christ: from him comes the grace of contrition as well as the cleansing of expiation.

There may indeed be the abandonment of certain vicious practices, and a breaking loose from habits which have held the soul in bondage. Long ere the man thinks of applying to Christ, and whilst almost a stranger to his name, he may make a great advance in reformation of conduct, renouncing much which his conscience has declared wrong, and entering upon duties of which he has been neglectful. But this comes far short of that thorough moral change which is intended by the inspired writers, when they speak of repentance. The outward conduct may be amended, whilst no attack is made on the love of sin as seated in the heart; so that the change may be altogether on the surface, and extend not to the affections of the inner man. But the repentance, required of those who are forgiven through Christ, is a radical change of mind and of spirit; a change which will be made apparent by a corresponding in the outward deportment, but whose great scene is within, and which there affects every power and propensity of our nature. And a repentance such as this, seeing it manifestly lies beyond the reach of our own strivings, is only to be obtained from Christ, who ascended up on high, and "received gifts for the rebellious," be-

coming, in his exaltation, the source and dispenser of those various assistances which fallen beings need as probationers for eternity.

What then is it which a man has to do who is desirous of becoming truly repentant? We reply that his great business is earnest prayer to Christ, that he would give him the Holy Spirit, to enable him to repent. Of course we do not mean that he is to confine himself to prayer, and make no effort at correcting what may be wrong in his conduct. The sincerity of his prayer can only be proved by the vigor of his endeavor to obey God's commands. But we mean, that, along with his strenuousness in renouncing evil habits and associations, there must be an abiding persuasion that repentance, as well as forgiveness, is to be procured through nothing but the atoning sacrifice of Christ; and this persuasion must make him unwearied in entreaty, that Christ would send into his soul the renovating power. It may be urged that Christ pardons none but the penitent; but our statement rather is, that those whom he pardons he first makes penitent.

And shall we be told that we thus reduce man below the level of an intelligent, accountable being; making him altogether passive, and allotting him no task in the struggle for immortality? We throw back the accusation as altogether unfounded. We call upon man for the stretch of every muscle, and the strain of every power. As to his being saved in indolence, saved in inactivity, he may as well look for harvest where he has never sown, and for knowledge where he has never studied. Is it to be an idler, is it to be a sluggard, to have to keep down that pride which would keep him from Christ; to be wrestling with those passions which the light that is in him shows must be mortified; to be unwearied in petition for the assistances of the Spirit, and in using such helps as have been already vouchsafed? If this be idleness, that man is an idler who is actuated by the consciousness, that he can no more repent than be pardoned without Christ. But if it be to task a man to the utmost of his energy, to prescribe that he go straightway for every thing which he needs to an invisible Mediator; go, in spite of the opposition of the flesh; go,

though the path lies through resisting inclinations; go, though in going he must abase himself in the dust, and proclaim his own nothingness; then we are exhorting the impenitent to the mightiest of labors, when we exhort them to seek repentance as Christ's gift. The assigning its true place to repentance; the destroying the notion that repentance is to be effected for ourselves, and then to recommend us to the Savior; this, in place of telling men that they have little or nothing to do, is the urging them to diligence by showing how it may be successful; and to effort, by pointing out the alone channel through which it can prevail. And if there be given to the angel of a church the same commission as was given to the angel of the church at Ephesus, so that he must come down upon a careless or backsliding congregation with a stern and startling summons; never let it be thought that he either keeps out of sight the moral inabilities of man, or urges to an inert and idle dependance, when he expatiates on the necessity, and exhorts to the duty, of repentance—he is preaching that Christ is all in all, and nevertheless he is animating his hearers to strive for the mastery, and struggle for deliverance, when he treats them in the words of our text, to "remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do the first works."

But there is more in this exhortation than the summons to repentance: memory is appealed to as an assistant in the duty to which men are called. In other parts of Scripture we find great worth attached to consideration—as when the Psalmist says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies." Here the turning to God's testimonies is given by David as an immediate consequence on the thinking on his ways, as though consideration were alone necessary to insure a speedy repentance. The great evil with the mass of men is, that, so far at least as eternity is concerned, they never think at all—once make them think, and you make them anxious; once make them anxious, and they will labor to be saved. When a man considers his ways, angels may be said to prepare their harps, as knowing that they shall soon have to sweep

them in exultation at his repentance.

And it is urging you to this consideration, to urge you to the remembering from whence you are fallen. We all know what a power there is in memory, when made to array before the guilty days and scenes of comparative innocence. It is with an absolutely crushing might that the remembrance of the years and home of his boyhood will come upon the criminal, when brought to a pause in his career of misdoing, and perhaps about to suffer its penalties. If we knew his early history, and it would bear us out in the attempt, we should make it our business to set before him the scenery of his native village, the cottage where he was born, the school to which he was sent, the church where he first heard the preached Gospel; and we should call to his recollection the father and the mother, long since gathered to their rest, who made him kneel down night and morning, and who instructed him out of the Bible, and who warned him, even with tears, against evil ways and evil companions. We should remind him how peacefully his days then glided away; with how much of happiness he was blessed in possession, how much of hope in prospect. And he may be now a hardened and desperate man: but we will never believe, that, as his young days were thus passing before him, and the reverend forms of his parents came back from the grave, and the trees that grew round his birth-place waved over him their foliage, and he saw himself once more as he was in early life, when he knew crime but by name, and knew it only to abhor—we will never believe that he could be proof against this mustering of the past—he might be proof against invective, proof against reproach, proof against remonstrance; but when we brought memory to bear upon him, and bade it people itself with all the imagery of youth, we believe that, for the moment at least, the obdurate being would be subdued, and a sudden gush of tears prove that we had opened a long sealed-up fountain.

And we know no reason why there should not be a like power in memory, in cases which have no analogy with this, except in the general fact, that men are not what they were. If we ar-



ray before us the records of man's pristine condition, and avail ourselves of such intelligence as it hath pleased God to vouchsafe, we may with sufficient truth be said to remember whence we fell. And very energetic and persuasive would be this remembrance. We should feel that we were gaining a great moral hold on a man, if we prevailed on him to contrast what he is, with what Adam was ere he ate the forbidden fruit. It is a contrast which must produce the sense of utter degradation. The waving trees of Paradise, and the glorious freshness of the young creation, and the unrestrained intercourse with God, and the beautiful tranquillity of human life—these will make the same kind of appeal, as the fields where we played in our boyhood, and the roof which sheltered us whilst yet untutored in the vices, and unblenched by the sorrows of the world. I was by creation a lofty being, with a comprehensive understanding, a will that always moved in harmony with the divine, and affections that fastened on the sublime and indestructible. I am, through apostacy, a wayward thing, with crippled energies, contracted capacities, and desires engrossed by the perishable. I had a body that was heir to no decay, a soul rich in the impress of Deity; but now I must go down to the dust, and traces of the defaced image are scarcely to be found on my spirit. I had heaven before me, and might have entered it through an obedience which could hardly be called a trial; but now, depraved in inclination, and debased in power, to what can I look forward but tribulation and wrath? Oh, this it is to remember from whence I am fallen.

And if I have been, like the Ephesian Church, what Scripture calls a backslider, may not memory tell me of comforts I experienced, when walking closely with God, of seasons of deep gladness when I had mortified a passion, of communion with eternity so real and distinct that I seemed already delivered from the trammels of flesh? It may well be, if indeed I have declined in godliness, that, though musing on past times, there will be excited within me a poignant regret. There will come back upon me, as upon the criminal in his cell, the holy music

of better days; and there will be a penetrating power in the once gladdening but now melancholy strain, which there would not be in the shrill note of vengeance. And thus in each case, memory may be a mighty agent in bringing me to repentance. It can scarcely come to pass, that I should diligently and seriously remember whence I am fallen, and yet be conscious of no desire to regain the lost position. I cannot gaze on Paradise, and not long to leave the wilderness; I cannot see in myself the wanderer, and not yearn for the home I have forsaken. And therefore is there a beautiful appropriateness in the message with which St. John was charged to the angel of the church at Ephesus. We know that except men repent, except the indifferent be roused to earnestness, the backsliding recovered to consistency, nothing can prevent their final destruction. And wishing to bring them to repentance, we would waken memory from her thousand cells, and bid her pour forth the imagery of what they were, that they may contrast it with what they are. If we can arm against them their own recollections, we feel that we shall have brought to bear the most powerful of engines. Our appeal is therefore to the past, our summons is to the shades of the dead. And though we know that no remonstrance, and no exhortation, can be of avail, except as carried to the heart by the Spirit of the living God, yet are we so persuaded of the power of consideration, and of the likelihood that those who are brought to consider their ways will go on to reform them, that we think we prescribe what cannot fail of success, when, in order that men may repent, we entreat them, in the words of our text, to remember from whence they are fallen, and do the first works.

But we turn from the exhortation to the threatening contained in our text, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." It is not difficult to determine what the calamity is which is figuratively denoted by the removal of the candlestick. St. John had beheld one like unto the Son of man, magnificently and mysteriously arrayed, standing in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, and holding in his right hand seven stars. The

evangelist is expressly informed that the seven stars are the angels, or bishops, of the seven churches; and that the seven candlesticks are those churches themselves. Hence the candlestick represents the christian church as erected in any land; and therefore the removing the candlestick out of his place can mean nothing less than the unchurching a nation, the so withdrawing from them the Gospel that they shall lose the distinctive marks of a christian community. We need not be over-careful as to the exactness with which we preserve the metaphor. If the candlestick be removed, the meaning must be that the spiritual light is removed; or that a land which has been blessed with a knowledge of christianity, and thereby brought specially into covenant with God, is deprived of the advantages which it has failed to improve, and dislodged from the relationship into which it had been admitted.

And this may take place, for undoubtedly this has taken place. There are indeed clear and encouraging promises in Scripture, sufficient to assure us that neither outward opposition, nor inward corruption, shall prevail to the extinction of Christ's church upon earth. But these promises refer generally to the church, and not to this or that of its sections. They give no ground for expecting that the church, for example, of England, or the church of Rome, will never cease to be a church—on the contrary, their tenor is quite compatible with the supposition, that England or Rome may so pervert, or abuse, the Gospel, as to provoke God to withdraw it, and give it to lands now overrun with heathenism. There may be, and there are, promises that there shall be always a candle in the world; but the candlestick is a moveable thing, and may be placed successively in different districts of the earth.

And we say that this unchurching of a nation is what has actually occurred, and what therefore may occur again, if mercies be abused, and privileges neglected. We appeal to the instance of the Jews. The Jews constituted the church of God, whilst all other tribes of the human population were strangers and aliens. And never were a people more beloved; never had a nation

greater evidences of divine favor on which to rest a persuasion that they should not be cast off and deprived of their advantages. Yet how completely has the candlestick been removed from Judea. The land of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob; the land which held the ark with its mysterious and sacramental treasures; the land where priests made atonement, and prophets delivered their lofty anticipations; the land which Jesus trode, where Jesus preached, and where Jesus died; has been tenanted for centuries by the unbeliever, profaned by the followers, and desecrated by the altars, of the Arabian impostor.

We appeal again to the early churches. Where are those christian societies to which St. Paul and St. John inscribed their epistles? Where is the Corinthian church, so affectionately addressed, though so boldly reproved, by the great apostle of the Gentiles? Where is the Philippian church, where the Colossian, where the Thessalonian, the letters to which prove how cordially christianity had been received, and how vigorously it flourished? Where are the Seven Churches of Asia, respecting which we are assured that they were once strenuous in piety, and gave promise of permanence in christian profession and privilege? Alas, how true is it that the candlesticks have been removed. Countries in which the Gospel was first planted, cities where it took earliest root, from these have all traces of christianity long ago disappeared, and in these has the cross been supplanted by the crescent. The traveller through lands where apostles won their noblest victories, where martyrs witnessed a good confession, and thousands sprang eagerly forwards to be "baptized for the dead," and to fill up every breach which persecution made in the christian ranks, can scarce find a monument to assure him that he stands where once congregated the followers of Jesus. Every where he is surrounded by superstitious little better than those of heathenism, so that the unchurching of these lands has been the giving them up to an Egyptian darkness. And what are we to say of such facts, except that they prove—prove with a clearness and awfulness of demonstration, which leave ignorance



inexcusable, and indifference self-condemned—that the blessings of christianity are deposited with a nation to be valued and improved, and that to despise or misuse them is to provoke their withdrawal? If we could trace the histories of the several churches to which we have referred, we should find that they all “left their first love,” grew lukewarm in religion, or were daunted by danger into apostacy. There was no lack of warning, none of exhortation; for it is never suddenly, never without a protracted struggle, that God proceeds to extremes, whether with a church or an individual. But warning and exhortation were in vain. False teachers grew into favor; false doctrines superseded the true; with erroneous tenets came their general accompaniment, dissolute practice; till at length, if the candlestick remained, the light was extinct; and then God gave the sentence, that the candlestick should be removed out of his place.

And never let it be thought that such sentence is of no very terrible and desolating character. Come foreign invasion, come domestic insubordination, come famine, come pestilence. Come any evil rather than the unchurched which is threatened in our text. It is the sorest thing which God can do against a land. He himself represents it as such, when sending messages of wo by the mouth of his servant Amos. “Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.” The blasting the fruits of the earth, so that the valleys should not yield their accustomed abundance—this would be a fearful thing, but there was to be something more fearful than this. The drying up the fountains, and the cutting off the streams—this would be a grievous dispensation, but there was to be something more grievous than this. The suspension of all messages from heaven, the cessation of that intercourse which had subsisted between the people and God, the removal of the light of revelation—this was the threatened evil, which would make comparatively inconsiderable the dearth of the bread, and the want of the water. Every other calamity may be sent in mercy, and have for its de-

sign the correction, and not the destruction, of its subjects. But this calamity has none of the character of a fatherly chastisement. It shows that God has done with a people; that he will no longer strive with them; but that henceforwards he gives them up to their own wretched devices.

And, therefore, with the removal of the Gospel must be the departure of whatever is most precious in the possessions of a people. It is not merely that christianity is taken away—though who shall measure, who imagine, the loss, if this were indeed all?—but it is that God must frown on a land from which he hath been provoked to withdraw his Gospel; and that, if the frown of the Almighty rest on a country, the sun of that country’s greatness goes rapidly down, and the dreariness of a moral midnight fast gathers above it, and around it. Has it not been thus with countries, and with cities, to which we have already referred, and from which, on account of their iniquities and impieties, the candlestick has been removed? The seven Churches of Asia, where are the cities whence they drew their names; cities that teemed with inhabitants, that were renowned for arts, and which served as centres of civilization to far-spreading districts? Did the unchurched these cities leave them their majesty and prosperity; did the removal of the candlestick leave undimmed their political lustre? Ask the traveller who gropes painfully his way over prostrate columns, and beneath crumbling arches, having no index but ruins to tell him that a kingdom’s dust is under his feet; and endeavoring to assure himself, from the magnitude of the desolation, that he has found the site of a once splendid metropolis? The cities, with scarce an exception, wasted from the day when the candlestick was removed, and grew into monuments—monuments whose marble is decay, and whose inscription devastation—telling out to all succeeding ages, that the readiest mode in which a nation can destroy itself, is to despise the Gospel with which it has been intrusted, and that the most fearful vial which God can empty on a land, is that which extinguishes the blessed shinings of christianity.

Oh, it may be the thought of those

who care little for the Gospel, and who have never opened their hearts to its gracious communications, that it would be no overwhelming calamity, if God fulfilled his threat, and removed the candlestick out of his place. They may think that the springs of national prosperity, and national happiness, would be left untouched; and that the unchurched people might still have their fleets on every sea, still gather into their lap the riches of the earth, and sit undisturbed a sovereign among the nations. I know not how far such might be actually the case. I know not how far the conquests or the commerce of a country might remain unaffected by the loss of its christianity. But this I know, that God's blessing could no longer rest on its victories, or accompany its trade; and that, therefore, if its armies triumphed, the triumph would be virtually defeat; and if its ships were richly freighted, it would be with fruits, which, like the fabled ones from the Dead Sea's shore, turn to ashes in the mouth. No, we again say, come any thing rather than this. Come barrenness into our soil; come discord into our councils; come treason into our camps; come wreck into our navies—but let us not be unchurched as a nation. We may be beloved of God, and He may have purposes of mercy towards us, whilst he takes from us our temporal advantages, but still leaves us our spiritual. He may be only disciplining us as a parent; and the discipline proves, not merely that there is need, but that there is room for repentance. But if we were once deprived of the Gospel; if the Bible ceased to circulate amongst our people; if there were no longer the preaching of Christ in our churches; if we were left to set up reason instead of revelation, to bow the knee to the God of our own imaginations, and to burn unhallowed incense before the idols which the madness of speculation would erect—then farewell, a long farewell, to all that has given dignity to our state, and happiness to our homes; the true foundations of true greatness would be all undermined, the bulwarks of real liberty shaken, the springs of peace poisoned, the sources of prosperity dried up; and a coming generation would have to add our name to those of countries

whose national decline has kept pace with their religious, and to point to our fate as exhibiting the awful comprehensiveness of the threat, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

But we rejoice in pronouncing this a doom, respecting which we do not augur a likelihood that it will fall on this kingdom. There may have been periods in the history of this land, when the upholders of true religion had cause for gloomy forebodings, and for fears that God would unchurch our nation. And some indeed may be disposed to regard the present as a period when such forebodings and fears might be justly entertained. They may think that so great is the array of hostility against the national church, that the most sanguine can scarce venture to hope that the candlestick will not be cast down. We cannot subscribe to this opinion. We are not indeed blind to the amount of opposition to the national church; neither have we the least doubt that the destruction of this church would give a fatal blow to the national christianity. We dare not indeed say that God might not preserve amongst us a pure christianity, if the national church were overthrown. But we are bold to affirm, that hitherto has the church been the grand engine in effecting such preservation; and that we should have no right to expect, if we dislocated this engine, that results would not follow disastrous to religion. I could not contend for the Established Church, merely because venerable by its antiquity, because halloved by the solemn processions of noble thought which have issued from its recesses, or because the prayers and praises which many generations have breathed through its services, seem mysteriously to haunt its temples, that they may be echoed by the tongues of the living. But as the great safeguard and propagator of unadulterated christianity; the defender, by her articles, of what is sound in doctrine, and, by her constitution, of what is apostolic in government; the represser, by the simple majesty of her ritual, of all extravagance; the encourager, by its fervor, of an ardent piety—I can contend for the continuance amongst us



of the Establishment, as I would for the continuance of the Gospel; I can deprecate its removal as the removal of our candlestick. It is not then because we are blind to the opposition to the national church, or fail to identify this church with the national christianity, that we share not the fears of those who would now prophesy evil. But we feel that danger is only bringing out the strength of the church, and that her efficiency has increased as her existence has been menaced. The threatening of our text belongs to the lukewarm and the indolent; its very language proves that it ceases to be applicable, if it have fanned the embers, and strung the energies. We believe of an apostolic church, that it can die only by suicide; and where are our fears of suicide, when enmity has but produced greater zeal in winning souls to Christ, and hatred been met by increased efforts to disseminate the religion of love?

We might not have ventured to introduce these observations, in concluding our discourses before this assembly, had we not felt that the church stands or falls with the universities of the land, and that the present condition of this university more than warrants our belief that the candlestick is not about to be removed. It is a gratification, not to be expressed, to find, after a few years' absence, what a growing attention there has been to those noblest purposes for which colleges were founded; and how the younger part, more especially, of our body, whence are to be drafted the ministers of our parishes, and the most influential of our laity, have advanced in respect for religion, and attention to its duties. One who has been engaged in other scenes may perhaps better judge the advance than those under whose eye it has proceeded; and if testimony may derive worth from its sincerity, when

it cannot from the station of the party who gives it, there will be borne strong witness by him who addresses you, that not only is the fire of genius here cherished, and the lamp of philosophy trimmed; but that here the candle, which God hath lighted for a world sitting in darkness, burns brightly, and that, therefore, though enemies may be fierce, the candlestick is firm.

But suffer me, my younger brethren, to entreat you that you would think more and more of your solemn responsibility. I cannot compute the amount of influence you may wield over the destinies of the church and the country. In a few years you will be scattered over the land, occupying different stations, and filling different parts in society. And it is because we hope you will go hence with religion in the heart, that we venture to predict good, and not evil. We entreat you to take heed that you disappoint not the hope, and thus defeat the prediction. We could almost dare to say that you have the majesty, and the christianity, of the empire in your keeping; and we beseech you, therefore, to "flee youthful lusts," as you would the plots of treason, and to follow the high biddings of godliness, as you would the trumpet-call of patriotism. Your vices, they must shake the candlestick, which God in his mercy hath planted in this land, and with whose stability he has associated the greatness of the state, and the happiness of its families. But your quiet and earnest piety; your submission to the precepts of the Gospel; your faithful discharge of appointed duties; these will help to give fixedness to the candlestick—and there may come the earthquake of political convulsion, or the onset of infidel assault, but christianity shall not be overthrown; and we shall therefore still know that "the Lord of Hosts is with us, that the God of Jacob is our refuge."

## SPITAL SERMON.

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This Sermon was preached according to annual custom, in commemoration of five several Hospitals in London. Their several Annual Reports were read in the course of the Sermon, as indicated by a line drawn across the page towards the end.

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## SERMON.

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“For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always.”—Matthew, 26 : 11.

With a heart full of the remembrance of the mercy which had been shown to her family, did Mary, the sister of Lazarus, approach and pour ointment over the head of the Redeemer. Not yet sufficiently taught that Christ was to be honored by the consecration of the best of our substance, the disciples murmured at what they thought waste, and called forth from the Savior a vindication of the act. He pronounced it possessed of a kind of prophetic power; and glancing onwards to that ignominious death, whereby the world's redemption was about to be achieved, declared that it had been done for his burial, and thus represented it as the produce of that affection which pays eagerly the last honors to one most cherished and revered.

Whether or no there had been given intimation to Mary of the near approach of the final scenes of Christ's ministrations, does not appear from the scriptural record. It is evident, however, that Christ grounds his defence of her conduct mainly on the fact, that his crucifixion was at hand, making the proximity of that stupendous event a sufficient reason for the course which she had followed. Thus, in conformity with the manner of teaching which he always pursued, that of extracting from passing occurrences the material of

some spiritual admonition, he takes occasion, from the pouring out of the ointment, to deliver a truth which hath about it all the unction of divinity. We allow that, on its original delivery, our text had a decided reference to existent circumstances; but we still contend that, in the fulness of its meaning, it is as forcible to ourselves as it was to Mary and the apostles. There was, indeed, a contrast implied in the first instance, which, we thank God, can no longer be urged, a contrast between the presence of Christ as vouchsafed to his church, and that same presence for a while withdrawn. The heavens have received the Savior until the times of the restitution of all things; but though with our bodily eyes we behold him not, we know that he is never absent from the assemblies of his people, but that “where two or three are met together in his name, there is he in the midst of them.”

Until the Redeemer had won to himself, by his agony and his passion, the mighty title of “Head over all things to the Church,”—a title which belongs to him not so much by the rights of his essential deity, as through virtue of his having entered into humanity, and presented it, in obedience and suffering, to the Creator—he could not put forth those gracious communications which



supply the place of a visible presence. Hence it must have come necessarily to pass, that any allusion to his removal from earth would bring a cloud over the minds of his disciples, since it was only from the headship to which I have adverted that they could derive those influences which teach the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. To the disciples, therefore, we again say, there was a contrast in the text which can scarcely be said to exist to ourselves. We are indeed looking forwards, unless we live most basely below our privileges, to a season when, after a manner infinitely more glorious than any which past ages have seen, the presence of the Redeemer shall be granted to his people. We know that the Bible hath painted, with all the power of splendid diction, a period at which the bridegroom shall return, and gathering triumphantly his elect from the four corners of the earth, unite them to himself in a visible and indestructible union. But whilst we attempt no denial that, ever since the ascension of Christ, the church hath been placed in what may fitly be called a widowed estate, we may still justly maintain, that the argument, from contrast which our text exhibits, was of local and temporary power. We have Christ with us in such real and glorious manifestations, as no apostle could have conceived of previously to the effusions of the Spirit. And in place of that carnal calculation which would detach the head from the members, and decide that no ministrations can be rendered to Christ, unless he move amongst us in the garniture of flesh, we have learned from the fuller disclosures of the Gospel, that the Savior is succored in the persons of his followers, so that having the poor always with us, we always have Christ on whom to shed the anointings of our love. If there were not, then, some general lessons couched under the limited assertion of the text, there would be but little in these words of Christ to interest the man of later generations. We could merely survey them as possessed originally of a plaintive and touching beauty, so that they must have fallen on the disciples' ears with all that melancholy softness which arrays the dying words of those we best love. We could only regard

them as exquisitely calculated to thrill through the hearts of the hearers, fixing, as they must have done, their thoughts on a separation which seemed to involve the abandonment of their dearest expectations, and to throw to the ground those hopes of magnificent empire which the miracles of Christ Jesus had aroused within them.

But the words are not thus to be confined in their application, and if we sweep out of view the incidents which give rise to their delivery, we may extract from them lessons well suited to sundry occasions, and to none more emphatically than to the present.

We are assembled to commemorate the foundation of certain noble institutions, which stand amongst the chief of those which shed honor on the land of our birth. And I see not how such commemoration can be better effected, or how that benevolence, upon which these illustrious institutions depend, can be more encouraged to go on with its labors, than by our searching into the bearings of the fact that "the poor we have always with us," remembering at the same time, that in ministering to them for the love of Christ, we as literally minister to the Redeemer himself, as if he also were always visibly with us.

The subject matter of discourse is thus opened before us. I take the assertion "ye have the poor always with you," as one which, whilst it prophetically asserts the unvarying continuance of poverty amongst men, leads us attentively to ponder on the ends which that continuance subserves; and then I turn to the fact that the head is always present amongst us in the members, and use it as a motive to the support of establishments which seek to alleviate distress.

Such are our two topics of discourse; the ends which the continuance of poverty has subserved,—the motives to benevolence which the presence of Christ supplies.

Now it is much to receive an assurance from the Redeemer himself that the poor we are always to have with us; for we may hence justly conclude that poverty is not, what it hath been termed, an unnatural estate, but rather one appointed to exist by the will of the Almighty. It hath ever been a favorite

subject of popular harangue, that there ought to come an equalization of the ranks of society, and that the diversity of condition which characterizes our species is a direct violation of what are proudly termed the rights of man. We allow it to be most easy to work up a stirring declamation, carrying along with it the plaudits of the multitude, whensoever the doctrine is propounded, that one man possesses the same natural claims as another to the riches which Providence hath scattered over the earth. The doctrine is a specious doctrine, but we hold it to be undeniably an unscriptural doctrine. We hold it to be clear to every fair student of the word of inspiration, that God hath irrevocably determined that the fabric of human society shall consist of successive stages or platforms; and that it falls never within the scope of his dispensations, that earthly allotments should be in any sense uniform. We are to have the poor always with us, and that too because the Creator hath so willed it, rather than because the creature hath introduced anomalies into the system. And therefore do we likewise hold, that every attempt at equalization is tantamount to direct rebellion against the appointments of heaven—it is neither more nor less than an effort to set aside the declared purposes of Jehovah; and never do we believe it can be aimed at in any land, unless infidelity go first, that stanch standard-bearer of anarchy, and leap upon our altars in order that it may batter at our thrones. The principle which seems now introducing itself into the politics of Europe, and which is idolized as the Nebuchadnezzar image of the day—the principle that all power should emanate from the people—may be hailed and cheered by the great body of mankind; but it is an unsound principle, for it is palpably an unscriptural principle,—the scriptural doctrine being that Christ is the Head of all rule and all authority, and that from the Head power is conveyed to his vicegerents upon earth: and I leave you to judge (and I speak thus out of reverence to the Bible, and not out of deference to the magistracy before whom I stand) what accordance there can be between this doctrine and that which has been set up as the Dragon of the age, seeing that the one

makes power descend from above, whilst the other represents it as springing from beneath.

We thus argue, that seeing it to be the appointment of heaven that we should "have the poor always with us," the duty of submission may be learnt from the continuance of poverty, and that God hath so mysteriously interwoven the motives to obedience with the causes of dissatisfaction, that a man must first brave the wrath by scorning the will of his Maker, before he can adventure on the tearing down the institutions of society.

But there are other, and those more obvious ends, which this continuance of poverty hath subserved. Let me premise, that although there is a broad line of demarcation, separating the higher from the lower classes of society, the points of similarity are vastly more numerous than the points of distinction. We are told in the Book of Proverbs, that "the rich and poor meet together, the Lord is the Maker of them all." Where is it, I pray you, that they thus meet? Descended from one common ancestor, the rich and poor meet before God on the wide level of total apostacy. This may be a hard doctrine, but nevertheless I would not that the ear should turn away from its truth. Intellect doth sever between man and man, and so doth learning, and outward honor, and earthly fortune, and there may appear no intimate link of association connecting the possessors of lofty genius with the mass of dull and common-place spirits, or binding together the great and the small, the caressed and the despised, the applauded and the scorned; but never yet have the dreams of revolutionary enthusiasm assigned so perfect a level to the face of human society, as that upon which its several members do actually meet, even the level of original sin,—the level of a total incapacity to ward off condemnation. Aliens from God, and outcasts from the light of his favor, there is no distinction between us as to the moral position which we naturally occupy; but the rich man and the poor man share alike, the one not more and the other not less, in the ruin which hath rolled as a deluge over our earth.

Yea, and if they stand by nature on



the same level of ruin, so are they placed by redemption on the same level of restoration. Men have garbled and mutilated the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ, by inventing their systems of exclusion, and have offended as much against philosophy as against theology, by limiting the effects of the atonement to certain individuals. The Redeemer had indeed human nature, but he had no human personality, and therefore he redeemed the nature in itself, and not this or that person. Just therefore as the whole race had fallen in the first Adam, so was the whole race redeemed or purchased by the second; and the sun in its circuits about this sin-struck globe shines not upon the lonely being, unto whom it may not be said with all the force of a heavenly announcement, for thy transgressions a Mediator hath died!

We go back then to the matter in hand, and we contend that the points of similarity between the rich and the poor are vastly more numerous than the points of distinction. The Bible supposes them placed in precisely the same moral attitude; so that whether a preacher enter into a palace or a cottage, he is nothing better than a base and time-serving parasite if he shape his message into different forms—the Gospel assuming not variety of tone, just according as the audience may be the wealthy and the pampered, or the indigent and the oppressed; but speaking unto all as beings born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and announcing unto all the same free and glorious tidings, that "God hath made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God, in him."

But now I would have you observe from these premises, how the continuance of poverty has subserved the end of displaying the comparative worthlessness of earthly possessions. Men are placed on widely different levels when viewed as members of human society; but they are placed on identically the same level when regarded as heirs of immortality,—and what is the necessary inference, save that when eternity is brought into the account, the relative advantages of life become absolutely evanescent? This simple fact, that "the poor we have always

with us," furnishes perpetually a practical exhibition, such as might otherwise have in vain been sought, of the total insignificance of things the most boasted, and the most prized, and the most coveted. For just suppose a contrary arrangement. Suppose that riches had been equally distributed, so that it would have come to pass that the poor we had not always with us,—why, then, it is clear that the Gospel must have been stripped of that surprising radiance which it derives from overthrowing all mortal differences, and gathering into one arena of nakedness and destitution the monarch and the captive, the potentate and the beggar. As the case now stands, we learn powerfully the worthlessness of wealth or honor in the sight of the Creator, by observing that he who has most of these must seek the salvation of his soul by precisely the same method as he who has least—for certainly it must follow from this, that in the eye of the Creator wealth and honor go for nothing. But then it is the continuance of poverty which furnishes this proof, and conclusive as it is, we must have searched for it in vain had it not been appointed that "the poor we should have always with us." If there were any alteration in this fact, so that the ranks of society became merged and equalized, we deny not that it would be equally true, that "riches profit nothing in the day of wrath;" but we should not have possessed the like ocular demonstration of the truth; we should have wanted the display of contrast. When all must be stripped, we should scarcely observe that any were stripped; and it is the very circumstance that there are wide temporal distinctions between man and man, which forces on our attention the stupendous truth, that we stand on a par in the sight of the Creator, yea, on the level of a helplessness, which as no mortal destitution increases, so neither can any mortal advantage diminish.

I would pause for one moment to press home this truth upon your consciences. You may have been wont to derive moral and political lessons from the continuance of poverty, but have you ever yet derived this vast spiritual lesson? Have you used the temporal destitution of the great body of your

fellow-creatures as an overwhelming evidence to yourselves of the divinity of salvation? We tell you that it is an evidence so decisive and incontrovertible, that if a man be now puffed up by secular advantages, and if he fancy himself capable of turning those advantages into a machinery for saving the soul, he may be said to have closed his eyes to the fact, that "the poor we have always with us"—always—so that whatever be the height to which civilization attains, whatever the spread of knowledge, whatever the standard of morality, poverty shall always continue as a display of the riches of grace, and as a standing memorial that "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts," shall the work of salvation be accomplished.

But I hasten to trace out certain other results which the continuance of poverty has produced. There needs only a cursory glance in order to our discerning, that the fact of the poor being always amongst us, has given free scope for the growth and exercise of christian graces. I might take the catalogue of excellences which Scripture proposes as the objects of our aspirations, and show you how each is cradled, so to speak, in the unevenness and diversity of human estate. If I turn, for example, to faith, it will be conceded on all hands, that the unequal distribution of the good things of this life is calculated to occasion perplexity to the pious, and that there is a difficulty of no slight dimensions, in reconciling the varieties of mortal allotments with the rigid equity of God's moral government. We can master the difficulty by no other process, save that of referring to the season when all the concerns of the universe shall be wound up, and when, by a most august development, the Judge, who sits on the great white throne, shall unravel the secrecies of every dispensation. But it is the province of faith, and that too of faith when in keenest exercise, thus to meet the discrepancies of the present by a bold appeal to the decisions of the future. And if it should come to pass that there were no discrepancies, which would be comparatively effected if the poor ceased from amongst us; then who perceives not

that this province of faith would be sensibly circumscribed? The problem with which it is now most arduous to grapple, and by the grappling with which faith is upheld in its vigor—the problem, wherefore does a merciful Creator leave in wretched destitution so many of his creatures—this would be necessarily taken out of our investigation—we should be girt about with the appearance of equable dealings in this life, and should seldom therefore be thrown for explanations on the mysteries of the next. And I know not what consequence can be more evident, than that a huge field would thus be closed against the exercises of faith, a field which is formed in its length and in its breadth out of verification of our text, that "the poor we have *always* with us."

But yet further. If there were to be no longer any poor, then it is evident that each one amongst us would be in possession of a kind of moral certainty that he should never become poor. Poverty would be removed from the number of possible human conditions, and there would be an end at once to those incessant and tremendous fluctuations which oftentimes dash the prosperous on the rocks and the quicksands. But now mark how, with the departure of the risk of adversity, would depart also the meekness of our dependance on the Almighty. We might instantly remove one petition from our prayers, "give us this day our daily bread." If we were secure against poverty, which we should be if poverty had ceased from the earth, there would be something of mockery in soliciting supplies, whose continuance was matter of certainty; and thus, by placing man out of the reach of destitution, you would go far to annihilate all those motives to simple reliance which are furnished by the vacillations of human condition; you would destroy that liveliness which is now the result of momentary exercise: and we once more contend, that for the delicacy of its minute, just as well as for the magnificence of its more extended, operations, faith is mainly indebted to the fact, that "the poor we have always with us."

I go on to observe, of how much beauty we should strip the Gospel, if we stripped the world of poverty. It



is one of the prime and distinguishing features of the character of Deity, as revealed to us in Scripture, that the poor man, just as well as the rich man, is the object of his watchfulness: that, with an attention undistracted by the multiplicity of complex concerns, he bows himself down to the cry of the meanest outcast; so that there is not a smile upon a poor man's cheek, and there is not a tear in a poor man's eye, which passes any more unheeded by our God, than if the individual were a monarch on his throne, and thousands crouched in vassalage before him. We allow that when thought has busied itself in traversing the circuits of creation, shooting rapidly from one to another of those sparkling systems which crowd immensity, and striving to scrutinize the ponderous mechanism of a universe, each department of which is full of the harmonies of glorious order,—we allow that, after so sublime a research, it is difficult to bring down the mind to the belief, that the affairs of an individual, and seemingly insignificant race, are watched over with as careful a solicitude as if that race were the sole tenant of infinite space, and this our globe as much covered by the wing of the Omnipotent, as if it had no associates in wheeling round his throne. Yet when even this belief is attained, the contemplation has not risen to one half of its augustness. We must break up the race piecemeal, we must take man by man, and woman by woman, and child by child—we must observe that to no two individuals are there assigned circumstances in every respect similar; but that each is a kind of world by himself, with his own allotments, his own trials, his own mercies: and then only do we reach the climax of what is beautiful and strange, when we parcel out our species into its separate units, and decide that not one of these units is overlooked by the Almighty; but that just as it is the same hand which paints the enamel of a flower and guides the rolling of a plant, so it is the same guardianship which regulates the rise and fall of empires, and leads the most unknown individual, when he goeth forth to seek his daily bread. Now who perceives not that, by removing the poor altogether from amongst us, we should greatly obscure

this amazing exhibition? The spectacle which is most calculated to arrest us, and to fill the vision with touching delineations of Deity, is that of earthly destitution gilded by the sunshine of celestial consolation,—the spectacle of a child of want and misfortune, laden with all those ills which were bequeathed to man by a rebellious ancestry, and nevertheless sustained by so elastic and unearthly a vigor, that he can walk cheerily through the midst of trouble, and maintain a deep and rich tranquillity, whilst the hurricane is beating furiously upon him. But, comparatively, there could be no such spectacle if there came an end to the appointment, that the poor we have always with us. Take away poverty, and a veil is thrown over the perfections of the Godhead; for we could not know our Maker in the fulness of his compassions, if we knew him not as a helper in the extremities of mortal desertion. It is given as one of the attestations of the Messiahship of Jesus, that “unto the poor the Gospel was preached;” and we conclude from this, as well as from the features of the Gospel in itself, that there is a peculiar adaptation in the messages of the Bible to the circumstances of those who have but little of this world's goods. And what need is there of argument to prove, that never does this Gospel put on an aspect of greater loveliness, than when it addresses itself to the outcast and the destitute? One might almost have thought that it had been framed for the express purpose of ministering to the happiness of the poor. Unto the men, indeed, of every station it delivers precepts which may regulate their duties, and promises which may nerve them to their discharge; but then it is that the Gospel appears under its most radiant form, when it enters the hovel of the peasant, and lights up that hovel with gladness, and fans the cheek of the sick man with angels' wings, and causes the crust of bread and the cruse of water to be received as a banquet of luxury, and brings into the wretched chamber such a retinue of ministering spirits, that he whom his fellow-men have loathed and abandoned, rises into the dignity of a being whom the Almighty delighted to honor. Oh, verily, the brilliant triumph of the Gospel of

Jesus of Nazareth is won from the career of a man who professes godliness in poverty. The world despises him, but he is lifted above the world, and sits in heavenly places with Christ: he has none of the treasures of the earth, but the pearl of great price he hath made his own: hunger and thirst he may be compelled to endure, but there is hidden manna of which he eats, and there are living streams of which he drinks: he is worn down by perpetual toil, and yet he hath already entered into rest,—“persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” Make poverty as hideous as it can ever be made by the concentration of a hundred woes,—let it be a torn, and degraded, and scorned, and reviled estate,—still can he be poor of whom it is said, that “all things are his,—the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come,—all are his, for he is Christ’s, and Christ is God’s?” We call this the brilliant triumph of the Gospel of Christ; a triumph from the study of which may be gathered the finest lessons of christianity; a triumph over all with which it is hardest for religion to grapple. And if it be a stupendous characteristic of the Gospel, that it adapts itself to every possible emergency, that it provides largely for all the exigencies of human beings: and if it be moreover true, that certain graces are peculiarly exercised by poverty, which would be comparatively uncalled for amid the comforts of affluence, then we may fairly make it matter of thanksgiving to God, that “the poor we have always with us,” seeing that if they had ceased from amongst us, half the glories of revelation must have been shut up in darkness, and the magnificence of the power of the Gospel would never have been measured, and the loveliness of the influences of the Gospel never been estimated.

But it is time that I gather to a close this survey of the ends which the continuance of poverty has subserved, and I shall therefore only add one more to the catalogue, but that especially connected with the occasion of this our assembling. The distinction of society into the poor and rich, introduces a large class of relative duties, which would have no existence, if “the poor

were not always amongst us.” It cannot be called an overcharged picture, if I declare that the removal of poverty would go far towards debasing and uncivilizing christendom; and that a sudden and uniform distribution of wealth would throw us centuries back in the march of moral improvement. The great beauty of that state of things which our text depicts is, that men are dependent one upon the other, and that occasions perpetually present themselves which call into exercise the charities of life. We need only remind you of the native selfishness of the human heart, a selfishness which is never completely eradicated, but which, after years of patient resistance, will creep in and deform the most disinterested generosity. And we ask you whether,—so far at least as our arithmetic is capable of computing,—this selfishness would not have reigned well nigh unmolested, had the world been quite cleared of spectacles of destitution, and if each man had been left without call to assist his brethren, seeing that his brethren were in possession of advantages setting them free from all need of assistance? According to the present constitution, men are necessarily brought into collision with distress; and the effect of the contact is to soften down those asperities which deform the natural character, and to plane away that ruggedness which marks the surface of the untrodden rock. But if there had been no physical wretchedness with which such collision could take place, then it appears to me evident that selfishness would have been left to grow up into a giant stature, and that the granite of the soul, which, though hard, may be chiselled, would have turned into adamant, and defied all impressions.

Let the poor be no longer amongst us, and you dry up, so far as we can judge, the scanty fountains of sympathy which still bubble in the desert. By removing exciting causes of compassion, you would virtually sweep away all kindliness from the earth; and by making the children of men independent on each other, you would wrap up every one in his own passions and his own pursuits, and send him out to be alone in a multitude, and thus reduce the creatures of the same species



into so many centres of repulsion, scornfully withstanding the approaches of companionship. There is no aspect under which our text can be presented more worthy of your serious contemplation than this. The relative duties, of which poverty is the parent, are those whose discharge is most humanizing to the rich, and at the same time most edifying to the poor. The higher classes of society are naturally tempted to look down upon the lower, and the lower are as naturally tempted to envy the higher; so that the distinctions of rank make way for the trial of humility in one case and of contentment in the other. But if there be truth in this reasoning; if there be a direct tendency in the mixture of various conditions to the smoothing the roughness of the human spirit, and to the cherishing of virtues most essential to our well-being; then may we not once more call upon you to admire the wisdom of the Almighty's dispensations, inasmuch as it is appointed by the purposes of heaven, that we should "have the poor always amongst us?"

Now, having traced certain of the ends which are decidedly subserved by the continuance of poverty, it remains that I speak briefly on our other topics of discourse. I may observe that the consideration suggested in the second clause of our text follows, with great force, on the review in which we have been engaged. There is a moral benefit conferred upon society by our having "the poor always with us;" but if we further remember, that Christ is with us in the persons of his destitute brethren, so that in ministering to them we minister to him, then the varieties of mortal estate pass before us under a spiritual aspect, and we find in poverty a storehouse of the motives of christianity.

It is here that I take my stand, with a view to the duty now intrusted to my care. The noble institutions which I am required to recommend to your continued support, are so many monuments of the truth that "the poor we have always with us." I trust I may add, that the careful and liberal patronage which they have hitherto received, has emanated from a sense of love to the Redeemer; and that the zeal with which they shall hereafter be up-

held, will flow from no inferior origin. He who endows a hospital, thinking to win favor with God through this his munificence, rears, like the Egyptian monarchs, a pyramid for his sepulchre, but leaves his soul without one secret chamber wherein she may be safe from the sleet of eternal indignation. We would press this matter upon you with all the fidelity that its importance demands. The soul is not to be saved by any, the most costly, giving of alms. Sea and land may be compassed, and the limbs be macerated by penance, and the strength worn down by painful attrition, and the wealth be lavished in feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked; and, nevertheless, the wrath of God be no more averted than if the life were passed in bold contempt of his name and attributes. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;" and they who have entered heaven, climbed that lofty eminence not by piles of gold and silver which they consecrated to Jehovah,—not by accumulated deeds of legal obedience,—but simply by the cross of the Redeemer, putting faith in the blood and righteousness of Him "who died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God."

But when the heart is occupied by this heaven-born principle of faith, there will be an immediate kindling of love towards the Author of redemption; and works of benevolence, which sit as an incubus on the soul so long as they are accounted meritorious, will be wrought as the natural produce of a grateful and devoted affection. If there be indeed within us the love of Him who hath loved us and given himself for us, then shall we be eager to support the foundations of a god-fearing ancestry, not through the bloated and deceitful expectation that the glories of futurity are to be purchased by attention to the necessitous, but simply in conformity with the apostolical maxim, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

The poor we have always with us, and thus have we always abounding opportunities of testifying our dedication to Him who is brought near by faith, though removed from sight, and who hath linked himself in ties of such close brotherhood with mankind that

he sympathizes with the meanest of the race. Upon the platform of love to the Redeemer do we take our stand, when recommending to your generous care those several Hospitals whose institution it is the business of this day's service to commemorate. I shall pause while the report of their proceedings during the past year is read to you, and then wind up my discourse by a brief exposition of their claims upon public benevolence.

Various and multiform are the ills which the charities, whose report you have now heard, set themselves to alleviate. The burden of poverty is sufficiently heavy, even whilst the animal frame is not wasted by the inroads of sickness. But when disease hath laid its hand upon the body, and the strength is fretted by pining maladies, then especially it is that penury is hard to bear; and the man who has wrestled bravely against want, whilst there was vigor in his limbs and play in his muscles, sinks down wearied and disconsolate, when the organs of life are clogged and impeded. Who would refuse to stretch out the hand of kindness, succoring the afflicted in this their hour of aggravated bitterness? Who could be callous enough to the woes of humanity, to be slow in providing that all which the skill and the wisdom of man can effect, towards lightening the pressure of sickness, may be placed within the reach of those who must otherwise waste away in unmitigated suffering? Who, in short, could be bold enough to call himself a man, and yet give himself up to a churlish indifference as to whether the pains of his destitute brethren were assuaged by the arts of medical science, or whether those brethren were left to the gnawings of racking disease, with no pillow for the aching head, with no healing draught for the writhing emaciated frame? One malady there is—the greatest, I may call it, to which flesh is heir, the unhappy subjects of which have a more than common claim on benevolence. It is much that accident and sickness should befall the body; but the climax of affliction is not reached until the mind itself is out of joint.

So long as the soul retains possession of her capacities, man, however assaulted, however agonized, falls not from his rank in the scale of creation, but rather, by displaying the superiority of the immortal over the mortal, proves himself the denizen of a mightier sphere. Man is, then, most illustrious and most dignified, when his spiritual part rises up unshattered amid the ruins of the corporeal, and gives witness of destinies coeval with eternity, by showing an independence on the corrodings of time. But when the battery of attack has been turned upon the mind, when reason has been assaulted and hurled from her throne, oh! then it is that the spectacle of human distress is one upon which even the beings of a higher intelligence than our own may look sadly and pitifully; for the link of communion with the long hereafter seems thus almost dissevered, and that pledge of an unbounded duration,—a pledge of which no bodily decay can spoil us—a pledge which is won by the soul out of the breakings-up of bone and sinew—for a while is torn away from man, and he remains the fearful nondescript of creation, dust lit up Deity, and yet Deity lost in dust.

Ye cannot be lukewarm in the support of an institution which, like one of those whose foundation we are met to commemorate, throws open its gates to the subjects of this worst of calamities, and it were to transgress the due bounds of my office, if I should insist further on the claims of those Hospitals which have been reared for the purpose of mitigating the ills attendant on bodily or mental disease.

But as the citizens of a great metropolis, you have a duty to perform in watching the moral health of an overgrown population. It becomes you to apply wholesome correctives to a spreading dissolution of manners, and to adopt such processes in dealing with the vicious and disorderly, as seem best calculated to arrest the contagion. There would be a grievous deficiency in the establishment of this gigantic city, if it numbered not amongst its hospitals, one especially set apart to the reception of the vagrant and the dissolute. The beginnings of crime must be diligently checked, if we wish



to preserve soundness in our population; and the best legislation is that which, by dealing strenuously with minor offences, employs the machinery most calculated to prevent the commission of greater.

But I turn gladly to the claims of an institution which can need no advocacy from the preacher's lips, seeing that the objects who are sheltered beneath its munificent protection, surround me, and plead eloquently, though silently, their own cause. Founded and fostered by the princes of the land, the hospital, which bears the name of Him who died as our surety, constitutes one of the prime ornaments of this emporium of wealth and greatness. Equalled by no other institution in the number of those for whose education and maintenance it provides, and excelled by none in the soundness of the learning which it communicates, I pass not the strictness of truth when I affirm, that he who would exhibit the splendor of British philanthropy should take his station in this pulpit, and point to the right hand and to the left. We have here a large multitude of the rising generation trained up in those principles which are calculated, under God's blessing, to make them valuable members of the community; and such is the course of their education, that whilst many are fitted to fill stations in the various departments of trade, others are prepared for the higher studies of a university, and thus introduced to the most solemn occupations of life. Who can behold such a number of his fellow-creatures, each with the dew of his youth just fresh upon him, and not rejoice that the early years of their lives are thus shielded and cherished? Who can remark how each bears upon his breast these animating words, "He is risen," and not desire that these young heirs of immortality may grow up into manhood, rooted in the faith of Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life," and showing that they themselves are "risen with Christ," by "seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God?" The snows of a polar winter must rest upon the heart which throbs not with emotion at surveying so many born in troublous times, who, with all the airy expectancies of youthful and untried

spirits, must go out into the walks of society, in days when they are more than commonly swept by the chilling blights of scepticism and vice.

Unnecessary though I deem it to dwell at any length on the duty of supporting this venerable establishment, yet would I speak affectionately to you who are its inmates, and conjure you, "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," to "remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Whilst you are still strangers to the seductions of an ensnaring world, I would warn you against the evils which will gird you round when you go forth from the peaceful asylum of your childhood, and mix, as you unavoidably must, with those who lie in wait to destroy the unwary. I would tell you that there is no happiness but in the fear of the Almighty; that if you would so pass through life as not to tremble and quail at the approach of death, make it your morning and your evening prayer, that the Holy Spirit may take possession of your souls, and lead you so to love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, that you may not be allured from the holiness of religion by any of the devices of a wicked generation. Ye read in your classical stories of a monarch who wept as his countless army passed before him, staggered by the thought, that yet a few years, and those stirring hosts would lie motionless in the chambers of the grave. Might not a christian minister weep over you, as he gazes on the freshness of your days, and considers that it is but too possible, that you may hereafter give ear to the scorner and the seducer. Thus might the buds of early promise be nipped; and it might come to pass, that you, the children, it may be, of pious parents, over whose infancy a godly father may have watched, and whose opening hours may have been guarded by the tender solitudes of a righteous mother, would entail on yourselves a heritage of shame, and go down at the judgment into the pit of the unbeliever and the profligate. Let this warning word be remembered by you all: it is simple enough for the youngest, it is important enough for the eldest. You cannot begin too soon to serve the Lord, but you may easily put it off too long; and the thing which

will be least regretted when you come to die is, that you gave the first days of existence to preparation for heaven.

But I refrain from enlarging further. I have touched briefly on the respective claims to support of those noble institutions which have been founded amongst us by the piety of our forefathers: I add only that the times in which we live are full of perplexity and danger. The nations of the world heave and swell like the waters of a stormy ocean. There is going forth through the length and breadth of the earth a restless and a revolutionary spirit; and these, our islands, which have hitherto been curtailed by the wing of an especial protection, seem not altogether unvisited by the perils which weave themselves around other lands. What then shall we do but arise in the strength of the Lord, and give ourselves strenuously to every labor which may improve the moral and physical condition of our people, and strive, as befits those who are alive to the startling aspect of the world, so to surround ourselves with the machinery of christian benevolence, that we may repel the aggressions of infidel hardihood? Let there be no closing our eyes to the difficulties by which we are environed; let there be no giving ear to the unhallowed speculations of a specious liberalism, which would show us new ways to national greatness and national renown, over the wreck of all that hath been held most sacred by our ancestry. If England wish to preserve her might amongst the nations, let her sons and her daugh-

ters confess their transgressions and repent them of their sins; let covetousness—the curse and darling of commercial cities, be abhorred, and lust renounced, and ambition mortified, and every bold working of impiety chased from amongst them; and let them, covered with the sackcloth of deep humiliation, bind themselves in a holy league for the advancement of the purposes of an enlarged philanthropy. Then, and not till then, may the hope be cherished, that the political hurricanes which shake the dynasties of Europe, shall leave unscathed our island sovereignty; and that whilst the rushing of a wrathful deluge dash away the land-marks of foreign states, Britain may lift her white cliffs above the surges, and rise amid the eddies like Mount Ararat from out the flood. “The poor you have always with you:” meet their spiritual and temporal necessities with the alacrity and zeal which become the followers of Christ; be yourselves men of prayer, and, so far as your influence extends, lead others to wrestle with the Almighty; and then, oh tell us not that England’s greatness hath touched its zenith; ask us not for the lament which may be wailed over her departed majesty,—home of mercy, home of piety, thou shalt still continue the home of plenty, the home of peace; the sunshine of heaven’s choice favor shall sleep upon thy fields, and the blithe music of contentment be heard in thy valleys; for “happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, blessed is that people whose God is the Lord.”



SERMONS PREACHED IN GREAT ST. MARY'S CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE;

AT THE EVENING LECTURE IN FEBRUARY, 1836 AND 1837.

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1836.

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SERMON.

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THE GREATNESS OF SALVATION AN ARGUMENT FOR THE  
PERIL OF ITS NEGLECT.

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“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”—Hebrews, 2 : 3.

There is nothing affirmed in these words, but the greatness of the salvation proposed by the Gospel; and from this greatness seems inferred the impossibility of escape, if we neglect the salvation. And there is, we think, surprising force in the question of our text, when nothing but the stupendousness of salvation is regarded as our proof, that to neglect it is to perish. It is a minister's duty, whether addressing his own congregation, or those to whom he is comparatively a stranger, to strive by every possible motive to stir his hearers to the laying hold on salvation, that so, whatever their final portion, he may be free from their blood. And therefore are we desirous to press you this night for an answer to the question, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” We wish you honestly to examine, whether the magnitude of redemption be not of itself an overcoming demonstration that ruin must follow its neglect. We would keep you close to this point. The power of the question lies in this—the peril of the neglect proved by the greatness of the salvation.

striking considerations, flowing from the fact that the salvation is so great, which must force you to admit the impossibility of escape asserted by St. Paul. We shall necessarily, as we proceed, descend so far into particulars, as to take by themselves certain elements of the greatness in question. But, whatever the constituent parts into which we may resolve salvation, it must be simply as great that we exhibit this salvation; and from the greatness, and from this alone, must we prove that none can escape who neglect the salvation. You see clearly that the peculiarity of the passage lies in this, that it infers the peril of the neglect from the greatness of the salvation. And in laboring at illustrating the accuracy of this inference, and the pressing on you your consequent danger if careless of the soul, we shall attempt no other arrangement of our discourse, but that which will set before you in succession, certain respects in which salvation is great, and use each successive exhibition as a proof, that to despise what is thus great, must be to make sure destruction.

And we are sure that there are many

Now if we were arguing with an

atheist, the man who disbelieves the existence of a God; and if we desired to convince him on this, the fundamental article of all religion, we should probably endeavor to reason up from the creation to the Creator, using the traces of an intelligent cause, by which we seem surrounded, in proof that a mightier architect than chance constructed our dwelling. But we are quite aware that our adversary might demand a demonstration, that nothing short of an infinite power could have builded and furnished this planet; and we are not perhaps well able to define at what point the finite must cease, and the infinite commence. It may be conceded that certain results lie beyond human agency, and yet disputed whether they need such an agency as we strictly call divine. What men could not produce, might possibly be produced by beings mightier than men, and yet those beings stop far short of Omnipotence.

We do not, therefore, think of maintaining, that the evidences of wisdom and power, graven on this creation, are the strongest which can be even conceived. On the contrary, we will not pretend to deny that we can imagine them greatly multiplied and strengthened. It is manifest, that the keener our faculties, and the more earnest our investigation, the clearer do these evidences appear; for there is no comparison between those apprehensions of the works of creation which the man of science has, and those within reach of the illiterate observer. And, therefore, it is quite conceivable that there might be either such a communication of more powerful faculties, or such a laying bare of the hidden wonders of nature, that our present amount of acquaintance with creation should be as nothing when compared with what might then be attained. What surprises a man, what appears wonderful to him, because beyond his skill to effect, or his wisdom to explain, does not necessarily present matter of surprise to an angel: the standard of wonderfulness grows with the faculties of the creature; there being nothing to overawe and astonish, till there is something far surpassing its power or its intelligence.

Hence, we should not perhaps feel warranted in saying to the atheist, how can you believe, if you resist so

great tokens of a Deity as are stamped on the scenery by which you are encompassed? If we can suppose yet greater tokens, it is possible that he who will not yield to the evidence now vouchsafed, would yield to that mightier which imagination can array. The atheist might say to us, I am not convinced by what I view around me. My own thoughts can suggest stronger witness for a Deity, if a Deity there be, than you think impressed on this earth, and its furniture, and its inhabitants. And whilst my mind can arrange a greater proof, you can have no right to denounce my unbelief as insurmountable, because not surmounted by what you reckon so great.

Now we stay not to show you, that he who can resist the evidences of an Infinite First cause, which are accessible to dwellers on this planet, would probably remain unconvinced if the universe, in all its spreadings, were open to his expatiations. He would carry with him that desire to disbelieve, which is the mainspring of infidelity; and this would always furnish an excuse for remaining the atheist. But if we cannot say to the atheist, when pointing to the surrounding creation, you withstand an evidence than which there cannot be a greater, we can say to the worldly-minded, when pointing to the scheme of redemption, you neglect a salvation than which there cannot even be imagined a mightier. If the atheist might appeal from proofs which have been given, to yet stronger which might have been furnished, we deny that the worldly-minded can appeal from what God hath done on their behalf, to a more marvellous interference which imagination can picture. It is the property of redemption, if not of creation, that it leaves no room for imagination. We will not defy a man to array in his mind the imagery of an universe, presenting the impress of Godhead more clearly than that in which we are placed. As we have already said, even if the universe remained the same, we can suppose such change in our faculties of observation as would clothe every star, and every atom, and every insect, with a hundred-fold more of the proof that there is a God. But we will defy a man to conceive a scheme for the rescue of



a lost world, which should exceed, in any single respect, that laid open by the Gospel. We affirm of this scheme, that it is so great that you cannot suppose a greater. It is not because our faculties are bounded, that it seems to us wonderful. We have right to consider that it wears the same aspect to the highest of creatures: the mystery of godliness being unsearchable as well to angels as to men. And if it be supposable that there are scenes, which other beings are permitted to traverse, far outdoing in the wonderfulness of structure, and the majesty of adornment, the earth on which we dwell—so that this creation is not the richest in the tracery of power and skill—we pronounce it insupposable, that there could have been made an arrangement on behalf of fallen creatures, fuller of Divinity, and more worthy amazement, than that of which we are actually the objects.

This is our first way of putting, or rather vindicating, the question of our text. We contend that atheism has a far better apology for resisting the evidences of a God which had spread over creation, than worldly-mindedness for manifesting insensibility to redemption through Christ. Atheism may ask for a wider sphere of expatiation, and a more glowing impress of Deity; for it falls within our power to conceive of richer manifestations of the invisible Godhead. But worldly-mindedness cannot ask for more touching proof of the love of the Almighty, or for a more bounteous provision for human necessities, or for more stirring motive to repentance and obedience. Those of you who are not overcome by what has been done for them, and who treat with indifference and contempt the proffers of the Gospel, are just in the position of the atheist who should remain the atheist after God had set before him the highest possible demonstration of himself. It is not too bold a thing to say, that, in redeeming us, God exhausted himself. He gave himself; and what greater gift could remain unbestowed? So then, if you neglect salvation, there is nothing which you would not neglect. God himself could provide nothing greater; and if therefore you are unaffected by this, you only prove yourselves incapable of being moved.

Thus it is the greatness of salvation which proves the utter ruin which must follow its neglect. If God have done for you the utmost which even Deity could do; if all the divine attributes, unlimited as they are, have combined, yea, even exhausted themselves in the scheme of your rescue; if the Creator could not by any imaginable display have shown himself more compassionate or more terrible, mightier to save or mightier to crush; and if you withstand all this, if you are indifferent to all this, if you "neglect so great salvation;" may we not affirm that the magnitude of that which you despise is an incontrovertible proof that you must inevitably perish? May we not argue, that, having shown yourselves too hardened to yield to that into which Deity hath thrown all his strength, and too proud to be humbled by that which involved the humiliation of God, and too grovelling to be attracted by that which unites the human to the divine, and too cold to be warmed by that which burns with the compassions of Him who is love—may we not argue that you thus prove of yourselves, that there is no possible arrangement by which you could be saved; that, resisting what in itself is greatest, you demonstrate, in a certain sense, that you cannot be overcome; and oh! then, if we have nothing to argue from but the stupendousness of redemption, what energy is there in the question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

But it is necessary, as we before observed, that we consider more in detail the greatness of salvation, and by resolving it into its elements, make clearer the proof of the peril of neglect. Let it then first be remarked, that salvation is great because of the agency through which it was effected. You know that the Author of our redemption was none other than the eternal Son of God, who had covenanted from the first to become the surety of the fallen. It came not within the power of an angel to make atonement for our sins: the angelic nature might have been united to the human, but there would not have been dignity in the one to give the required worth to the sufferings of the other. So far as we have the power of ascertaining, it

would seem that no being but the Divine, taking to himself flesh, could have satisfied justice in the stead of fallen men. But then this is precisely the arrangement which has been made on our behalf. It was the second person in the ever-blessed Trinity, who, compassionating the ruin which transgression had brought on this earth, assumed our nature, exhausted our curse, and died our death. And certainly, if there be an aspect under which redemption appears great, it is when surveyed as the achievement of the only begotten of the Father. The majesty of the agent gives stupendousness to the work, and causes it to dilate till it far exceeds comprehension. It is mainly on this account that we can declare even imagination unable to increase the greatness of the arrangement for our rescue. This arrangement demanded that God himself should become man, and sustain all the wrath which sin had provoked; and what can be imagined more amazing than the fact, that what the arrangement demanded literally took place? The problem, how God could be just and yet the justifier of sinners, baffled all finite intelligence, because a divine person alone could mediate between God and man; and if created wisdom could have discovered the necessity, it would never have surmised the possibility.

Now certainly that which, more than any thing else, rendered human redemption insupposable, when submitted to the understanding of the very highest of creatures, must be confessed to be also that which gives a sublime awfulness to the plan, and invests it with a grandeur which increases as we gaze. In looking at the cross, and considering that our sins are laid upon the being who hangs there in weakness and ignominy, the overcoming thought is, that this being is none other than the everlasting God; and that, however he seems mastered by the powers of wickedness, he could by a single word, uttered from the tree on which he immolates himself, scatter the universe into nothing, and call up an assemblage of new worlds, and new systems. This makes salvation great—I shall know how great, when I can measure the distance between the eternal and the perishable, omnipotence and feebleness,

immortality and death. But if salvation is great, because the Savior is Divine, assuredly the greatness of salvation proves the peril of neglect. To neglect the salvation must be to throw scorn on the Savior; and that Savior being so great, "how shall we escape?" Oh, if it give an unmeasured vastness to the work of our redemption, that he who undertook, and carried on, and completed that work, was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" if the fact, that he "who bare our sins in his own body on the tree," was that illustrious being "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," magnify our rescue from death till thought itself fails to overtake its boundaries; then there is a greatness in the proffered deliverance, derived from the greatness of the deliverer, which proclaims us ruined if we treat the offer with contempt. We are taught, by the greatness, that there can be salvation in none other, for God would not have interposed, could any other have delivered. We are taught that to neglect, is to set at nought Him who can crush by a breath, and to convert into an enemy, pledged to our destruction, the alone being that could be found throughout a peopled immensity powerful enough for our rescue. And what say you, men and brethren—if the greatness of the salvation depend on the greatness of the Savior, and this greatness demonstrate that to neglect the salvation, is to throw away our only hope, and to array against ourselves that fiercest of all vengeance, Divine mercy scorned—what say you, in contradiction of the impossibility asserted by the question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

But again—we may affirm this salvation to be great, because of the completeness and fulness of the work, great in itself, as well as in its Author. We might be sure that what a divine agent undertook would be thoroughly effected; and accordingly, the more we examine the scheme of our redemption, the more may we prove it in every sense perfect. The sins of the whole race were laid upon Christ; and the divinity gave such worth to the sufferings of the humanity, that the whole race might be pardoned, if the whole



race would put faith in the substitute. There is consequently nothing in our own guiltiness to make us hesitate as to the possibility of forgiveness. The penalties due to a violated law have been discharged; and therefore, if we believe in our surety, we are as free as though we had never transgressed. And is not that a great salvation, which places pardon within reach of the vilest offenders; and which, providing an atonement commensurate with every amount of iniquity, forbids any to despair who have a wish to be saved?

But yet further—this salvation not only provides for our pardon, so that punishment may be avoided; it provides also for our acceptance, so that happiness may be obtained. The faith which so interests us in Christ, that we are reckoned to have satisfied the law's penalties in him, obtains for us also the imputation of his righteousness, so that we have a spotless covering in which to appear before God. Hence we have share in the obedience, as well as in the suffering of the Mediator; and whilst the latter delivers from the death we had deserved, the former consigns to the immortality we could never have merited. And is not this a great salvation, great in its simplicity, great in its comprehensiveness, which thus meets the every necessity of the guilty and helpless; and which, arranged for creatures whom it finds in the lowest degradation, leaves them not till elevated to the very summit of dignity?

But if salvation be thus great in the fulness of its provisions, what again does the greatness prove but the peril of neglect? If the salvation were in any respect deficient, there might be excuse for the refusing it our attention. If it met our necessities only in part, leaving much to be sought in other quarters, and supplied from other sources, it would necessarily lose much of its greatness; and as its greatness diminished, so perhaps would its claim on our eager acceptance. If, providing pardon for past offences, it left us to stand or fall for the future by our own obedience, making final security the result of nothing but our diligence, neglect might be palliated by the confessed fact, that what it offered sufficed not for our wants. To pardon me, and then leave

me to gain heaven by my own works, were to make death as sure as ever, but only more terrible, because I had been mocked with the prospect of life. And I might have an apology for not giving heed to the Gospel and not striving to comply with its demands, if I could plead that this Gospel proffered only the half of what I need, and that I could no more furnish the remainder than provide the whole. But the salvation is great, so great that I cannot find the moral want of which it does not present the supply. It is so great, that I can only describe it by saying, that Divine knowledge took the measure of every human necessity, and Divine love and power gathered into this salvation a more than adequate provision. What then if we neglect this salvation? The salvation is great, as furnishing all which we require: what then is to neglect it, but to put from us all which we require? The salvation is great, because meeting with a wonderful precision our every exigence: what then is to neglect it, but to leave our every exigence unsatisfied and uncared for? The salvation is great, because proffering the pardon of sin, and a righteousness which will endure the scrutinies of the Omniscient, and victory over death, and acquittal, yea, reward, at the judgment: what then is it to neglect it, but to keep the burden of unexpiated guilt, and to resolve to go hence with no plea against wrath, and to leave the sting in death, and to insure dreariness and agony through eternity? Oh, it is the completeness of salvation which gives it its greatness. Salvation is colossal, towering till lost in the inaccessible majesty of its Author, because containing whatever is required for the transformation of man from the child of wrath to the child of God, from death to life, from the shattered, and corruptible, and condemned, to the glorious, and imperishable, and approved. But if all this give greatness to salvation, beyond doubt it is the greatness which proves, that, in treating the Gospel with indifference, we block up against ourselves the alone path by which sinners can flee Divine wrath. As the scheme of redemption rises before us in its grandeur and plenitude—a grandeur which makes it more than commensurate with the ruin which

apostacy hath fastened on mankind, and a plenitude through which it meets the every want of every one who longs to grasp eternal life—why, the more magnificent, and the more comprehensive, appears the proffered deliverance, with the more energy does it echo back the question of the apostle, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

But there are yet other ways in which we may uphold the justice of the argument, which infers the peril of neglect from the greatness of salvation. We proceed to observe that salvation is great, not more because of the greatness of the Agent by whom it was achieved, than of Him by whom it is applied. The personal presence of the Redeemer with his church was undoubtedly a privilege and blessing surpassing our power to estimate. Yet, forasmuch as the descent of the Spirit could not take place without his own departure from earth, Christ assured his disciples that it was expedient for them that he should go away; thus implying it to be more for their benefit that the Holy Ghost should come down, than that himself should remain. And if, therefore, it give greatness to salvation that it was effected by the Son, it must give as much that it is applied by the Spirit. That a person of the ever-blessed Trinity—that energizing Agent who is described as brooding over the waters, when creation had not yet been moulded into symmetry, that He might extract order from confusion—that this being should continually reside upon earth, on purpose that he may act on the consciences and hearts of mankind through the Gospel of Christ: we say of this, that it gives to our salvation the perpetual majesty of Divinity, an awfulness scarce inferior to that which it derives from the sacrifice of the Son. The presence of the Spirit with the church, a presence so actual and universal that the heart of each amongst us is the scene of his operations, and the truth of our redemption through Christ is that which he strives to bring home to our affections,—this assuredly stamps a greatness on the arrangements for deliverance, only to be measured when we can measure God himself.

But, if it gives greatness to salvation

that it is applied by the Spirit, who can fail to perceive that from the greatness may be learned the peril of neglect? We are certain of every one amongst you who neglects salvation, that he withstands the suggestions and strivings of the Spirit of the living God. We know that there is not one of you, the most indifferent and careless in regard to the threatenings and promises of the Gospel, who has not had to fight his way to his present insensibility against the powerful remonstrances of an invisible monitor, and who is not often compelled, in order to the keeping himself from alarm and anxiety, to crush, with a sudden and desperate violence, pleadings which are fraught with super-human energy. We know this. We want no laying bare of your secret experience in order to our ascertaining this. We need no confessions to inform us that you have some little trouble in destroying yourselves. The young amongst you, whose rod is pleasure and whose home the world, we would not believe them if they assured us, that they never know any kind of mental uneasiness; that never when in a crowd, never when alone, do they hear the whisperings of a voice which tells them of moral danger; that they have never difficulty, when told of the death of an associate, or when they meet a funeral, or when laid on a sick-bed, in repressing all fear, all consciousness of a necessity for a thorough change of conduct. We would not believe them, we say, if they assured us of this. We know better. We know them the possessors of a conscience. We know them acted on by the Spirit of the Almighty. We know them immortal, sons and daughters of eternity, however they may endeavor to live as though death were annihilation. And therefore we would not believe them. Oh, no. As soon believe the rock, were it gifted with speech, which should argue, that, because unsoftened, it was never shone on by the sun, and never swept by the winds, and never dashed by the waters, as the granite of the heart, which, because yet insensible, would deny that an unseen hand ever smote it, or celestial dews ever fell on it, or divine beams strove to penetrate it.

No, we cannot believe you when you



would tell us that you are let alone by God. Again we reply that we know better. We know that the young man, who is the slave of his passions, has often a misgiving that his tyrants here will be his tormentors hereafter. We know that the young woman, whose deity is dress, is sometimes startled by the thought of the shroud and the winding-sheet. We know that the merchantman, laboring to be rich, is now and then aghast with fear of being poor through eternity. We know that the shrewd man, too cunning to be duped by any but himself, has moments in which he feels, that, in the greatest of all transactions, he may perhaps be over-reached, and barter the everlasting for the perishable. We know that the proud man, moving in a region of his own, and flushed with the thought how many are beneath him, is occasionally startled by a vision of utter degradation, himself in infamy, and "How art thou fallen!" breathed against him by the vilest. We know that those who neglect means of grace, who, when invited to the Lord's table, continually refuse—we know, that, as they turn their back on the ordinance, they do violence to a secret remonstrance, and feel, if only for an instant, (oh, how easy, by the resistance of an instant, to endanger their eternity!) that they are rejecting a privilege which will rise against them as an accuser. We know all this, and we cannot believe you when you would tell us that you are let alone by God. You are not let alone. You are acted on through the machinery of conscience. You may have done your best towards mastering and exterminating conscience, but you have not yet quite succeeded. There is Divinity in the monitor, and it will not be overborne. We know that you are not let alone: for the salvation which we press on your acceptance is a great salvation; and in nothing is this greatness more apparent than in the fact, that the Spirit of the Almighty is occupied with commending this salvation to sinners, and combating their prejudices, and urging them to accept. It is indeed a marvellous greatness, that Omnipotence itself should not be more engaged with upholding the universe, and actuating the motions of unnumbered systems,

and sustaining the animation of every living thing, from the archangel down to the insect, than with plying transgressors with all the motives which are laid up in the Gospel, admonishing them by the agony, and the passion, and the death of a Mediator, and warning them by the terrors, as well as inviting them by the mercies, of the cross. It is a marvellous greatness. But if you remain the indifferent and unbelieving, this greatness only proves that you are not to be overcome by the strongest power which can be brought to bear on our nature; proves that an agency, than which none is mightier, has wrestled with you, and striven with you, but as yet all in vain; proves therefore the certainty of your destruction, if you persist in your carelessness, because it proves, that, having withstood the most potent means, there can be none to which you will yield: and what is this but proving the peril of neglect from the greatness of salvation? what is this, since the greatness of salvation depends much on the greatness of the being who applies it, what is this but asking, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

But we have yet another mode in which to exhibit the same truth; to show, that is, that the greatness of salvation proves the impossibility that they who neglect it should escape. We are bound to regard the Gospel of Christ Jesus as the grand revelation of future punishment and reward. Until the Redeemer appeared, and brought men direct tidings from the invisible world, the sanctions of eternity were scarcely at all made to bear on the occupations of time. It cannot indeed be said that Christ first taught the immortality of the soul; for from the beginning the soul was her own witness, though oftentimes the testimony was inadequately given, that she perished not with the body. Yet so imperfect had been the foregoing knowledge, as compared with that communicated by Christ, that St. Paul declares of the Savior, that he "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." In the teachings of the Mediator we have such clear information as to our living under a retributive government, that ignorance can

be no man's excuse, if he act as though God took no note of his conduct. And we reckon that much of the greatness of the Gospel consists in the greatness of the reward which it proposes to righteousness, and the greatness of the punishment which it denounces on impenitence. It is a great salvation, if on the alternative of its rejection, or acceptance, hinges another alternative, that of everlasting misery or everlasting happiness. The characteristic of great may most justly be ascribed to a system, whose sanctions are of so sublime and awful a description, which animates to self-denial by the promise of a heaven where "there is fulness of joy for evermore," and warns back from wickedness by the threatening of a worm that never dies, and a fire that is not quenched. It was not redemption from mere temporary evil that Christ Jesus effected. The consequences of transgression spread themselves through eternity; and the Savior, when he bowed his head and said, "It is finished," had provided for the removal of these consequences, in all the immenseness whether of their extent or their duration. And we say that in nothing is the greatness of salvation more evidenced than in its dealing with everlasting things: it did not indeed make man immortal; but, finding him immortal, and his immortality one of agony and shame, it sent its influences throughout this unlimited existence, wrung the curse from its every instant, and left a blessing in its stead. Exceeding great is our salvation in this, that it opens a prospect for eternity than which imagination can conceive none more brilliant, if we close with the proffer, and none more appalling, if we refuse.

But if this be its greatness, what does the greatness prove of those by whom it is neglected? In order to your being animated to the throwing off the tyranny of the things of time and sense, the Gospel sets before you an array of motive, concerning which it is no boldness to say, that, if ineffective, it is because you are immovable. If heaven fail to attract, and hell to alarm—the heaven and the hell which are opened to us in the revelation of Christ—it can only be from a set determination to continue in sin, a determination, proof

against all by which, as rational agents, we are capable of being influenced. If you could be excited by reward, is there not enough in heaven; if you could be deterred by punishment, is there not enough in hell?

What, will you tell me that you can be roused, that your insensibility is not such as it is impossible to overcome, or rather, that your choice is not so fixed but that it might be swayed by adequate inducement, when you will not resign a bauble which stands in competition with heaven, nor deny an appetite for the sake of escaping hell? Is it that heaven is not sufficiently glorious; is it that hell is not sufficiently terrible? We can admit no plea from deficiencies in the proposed punishment or reward. Indeed there can be none of you bold enough to urge it. The man whom heaven cannot allure from sin, the man whom hell cannot scare from sin, would a brighter heaven (if such there could be,) or a fiercer hell, prevail with him to attempt the overcoming corruption? Oh, the salvation is great, greater in nothing than in the reward and punishment which it propounds to mankind; for of both it may be said, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." But then, being thus great, its greatness is our proof that there is no hope of moving those whom it moves not. The happiness promised to obedience, there can be imagined none richer; the wretchedness threatened to disobedience, there can be imagined none sterner. And yet the man is unaffected. He is not attracted by the happiness—then I must despair of attracting him. He is not alarmed by the wretchedness—then I must despair of alarming him. And, therefore, it is the greatness of the salvation which shows me his peril. Yea, as this greatness is demonstrated by the proposition of everlasting portions, not to be exceeded in the intenseness whether of joy or of wo, and which therefore leave no inducement untried by which the careless may be roused, and the sensual braced to self-denial, we seem to hear this question reverberated alike from the firmament above with its homes for the righteous, and from the abyss beneath with its prisons for the lost, "How shall we es-



cape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

Such, brethren, are certain of the reasons—and, had time permitted, we might have adduced more—which prove the connection between, the greatness of salvation, and the peril of neglect. And now we ask the careless and the worldly-minded amongst you, whether they have an answer to give to the solemn question before us. The demand is, "How shall we escape?" You must undoubtedly have some reply in readiness. We have no right to accuse you of the incalculable folly of owning that there is only one way of escape from the most terrible judgments, and yet taking no heed to walk in that way. You are furnished then with a reply: we will not charge you with a want of common sense: we must allow you the credit of having a reason to give for destroying yourselves. But we should like to know the reason. We can hardly imagine its form. Perhaps you intend to pay attention to the Gospel hereafter. But no, this is no reason for neglect. This confesses the necessity of giving heed; and therefore proves you more than ever culpable in your negligence. Perhaps you contend that you quite admit all the claims of the Gospel; that you are amongst those who receive it, not those who reject; and that you know not why it should condemn you, since you give it heartily the preference to every other religion. But no, this is no apology. It might be plausible, if the question were, How shall we escape, if we disbelieve, deny, ridicule, oppose, so great salvation? but oh, sirs, it is,

"How shall we escape if we neglect?" To neglect, just to treat with coldness or carelessness, to give attention to other things in preference, not the being the openly infidel, but the actually indifferent; this it is which, if there be truth in our text, insures man's destruction.

And therefore we again say that we cannot imagine the answer with which, thinking calculating beings as ye are, you would parry the home-question of our text. But of this we can be certain, that your answer has no worth. The question of the apostle is the strongest form of denial. Ye cannot escape if ye neglect. And be ye well assured, that, if ye could interrogate the spirits in wretchedness, negligence would be that which they would chiefly give as the cause of their ruin. There would be comparatively few who would tell you they had rejected christianity; few that they had embraced deistical views; few that they had invented for themselves another mode of acceptance; but the many, the many, their tale would be, that they designed, but delayed to hearken to the Gospel; that they gave it their assent, but not their attention; that,—are ye not staggered by the likeness to yourselves?—though they knew, they did not consider; apprised of danger, they took no pains to avert it; having the offer of life, they made no effort to secure it; and therefore perished, finally, miserably, everlastingly, through neglect of the great salvation. God grant that none of us, by imitating their neglect, share their misery.

## SERMON.

## ON THE EFFECTS OF CONSIDERATION.\*

"When I consider, I am afraid of Him."—Job, 23 : 15.

In this chapter Job declares, in language of great sublimity, the unsearchableness of God. "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." Vexed with many and sore trials, the patriarch vainly strove to understand God's dealings, and, though still holding fast his integrity, was almost tempted to doubt whether he should escape from his troubles. He dwells on the immutability of God; and, thinking that possibly this immutability is engaged to the continuance of his sorrows, only heightens his anxieties by pondering the unchangeableness of God. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." If there had gone out a decree against him, appointing calamity to be his portion, Job felt that deliverance was not to be hoped for. "Therefore," saith he, "I am troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him."

It was not, you observe, a hasty glance at the character of God, which gave rise to the fear which the patriarch expresses. His fear was the result of deep meditation, and not of a cursory thought. "When I consider, I am afraid of him." The cursory thought might have included nothing but the benevolence of God, and thus have induced the sufferer to expect relief from his woes. But the deep meditation brought under review many attributes of the Almighty, and there was

much in these attributes to perplex and discourage.

It may indeed have been only the unchangeableness of God, which, engaging the consideration, excited the fears of the patriarch. But we are not bound, in discoursing on our text, to limit to one attribute this effect of consideration. There is the statement of a general truth, though, in the case before us, the application may have been particular. That the fear, or dread, of God is the produce of consideration; that it does not therefore spring from ignorance, or want of thought; this is the general truth asserted by the passage, and which, as accurately distinguishing religion from superstition, demands the best of our attention. It is not to be doubted that a superstitious dread of a Supreme Being is to be overcome by consideration; and it is as little to be doubted that a religious dread is to be produced by consideration. The man who has thrown off all fear of God, is the man in whose thoughts God finds little or no place. If you could fasten, for a while, this man's mind to the facts, that there is a God, that he takes cognizance of human actions as moral Governor of the universe, and that he will hereafter deal with us by the laws of a most rigid retribution, you would produce something like a dread of the Creator; and this dread would be superstitious or religious, according to the falseness, or soundness, of principles admitted and inferences deduced. If the produced dread were superstitious, it would give way on a due consideration of these principles and inferences; if religious, such consideration would only deepen and strengthen it.

We are sure that the absence of con-

\* A collection was made after this sermon, in support of the Irish Society of London.



sideration is the only account which can be given of the absence of a fear of the Almighty. It is not, and it cannot be, by any process of thought, or mental debate, that the great mass of our fellow-men work themselves into a kind of practical atheism. It is by keeping God out of their thoughts, or allowing him nothing more than the homage of a faint and passing remembrance, that they contrive to preserve that surprising indifference, which would almost seem to argue disbelief of his existence. And there is not one in this assembly, whatever may be his unconcern as to his position relatively to his Maker, and whatever his success in banishing from his mind the consequences of a life of misdoing, in regard of whom we have other than a thorough persuasion, that, if we could make him consider, we should also make him fear.

It is not that men are ignorant of facts; it is that they will not give their attention to facts. They know a vast deal which they do not consider. You cannot be observant of what passes around you, or within yourselves, and fail to perceive how useless is a large amount of knowledge, and that too simply through want of consideration. To borrow the illustration of a distinguished writer, who has so treated as almost to have exhausted this subject, every one knows that he must die; and yet the certainty of death produces no effect on the bulk of mankind. It is a thing known, it is not a thing considered; and therefore those who are sure that they are mortal, live as though sure they were immortal. Every one of you knows that there is a judgment to come. But may we not fear of numbers amongst you, that they do not consider that there is a judgment to come; and may we not ascribe to their not considering what they know, their persisting in conduct which must unavoidably issue in utter condemnation?

We might multiply this kind of illustration. But the fact is so apparent, the fact of knowledge being useless because the thing known is not considered, that it were but wasting time to employ it on its proof. We may suppose that we carry with us the assent of every hearer, when we say, that, even in reference to the things of this life, and much more of the next, there

are hundreds who have knowledge for one who has consideration. We must all perceive how frequent it is for truths to receive the assent of the understanding, and gain a lodgment in the memory; and yet, though they may be of stirring moment, to exert no influence on the conduct. If as fast as we gather information into the chambers of the mind, we were also gathering motive into the recesses of the soul, it is evident that each page of Scripture, as we possessed ourselves of its announcements, would minister to our earnestness in wrestling for immortality. But the melancholy fact is, that we may, and that we do, increase the amount of information, without practically increasing the amount of motive. It is quite supposable that there are some amongst yourselves, who, by a regular attendance on Sabbath ministrations, and by diligent study of the Bible, have acquired no inconsiderable acquaintance with the scheme and bearings of christianity; but who are nevertheless as worldly-minded, in spite of their theology, as though ignorant of the grand truths disclosed by revelation. We might subject these persons to a strict examination, and try them in the several departments of divinity. And they might come off from the scrutiny with the greatest applause, and be pronounced admirably conversant with the truths of the Bible. But of all the knowledge thus displayed, there might not be a particle which wielded any influence over actions. The whole might be reposing inertly in the solitudes of the memory, ready indeed to be summoned forth when its possessor is called into some arena of controversy, but no more woven into the business of every-day life, than if it were knowledge of facts which are unimportant, or of truths which are speculative. And the main reason of this has been already advanced, the want of consideration. You know there is a God; but you do not fear this God, you do not live under a sense of his presence and an apprehension of his wrath, because you do not consider that there is a God.

And we wish it well observed that man is answerable for this want of consideration, inasmuch as it is voluntary, and not unavoidable. We certainly

have it in our power, not only to apply ourselves to the acquisition of knowledge, but, when the knowledge has been acquired, to direct the attention to the tendencies of the ascertained truths. If this be done, there is every likelihood that the truths will produce their right effects on the moral feelings; if this be neglected, the almost certainty is, that, whatever their nature, they will not call forth those emotions which they are both intended and calculated to excite. The truths of revelation are adapted, according to the constitution of our moral capacity, to rouse within us certain feelings. And by fixing the mind on these truths, when investigated and determined—and this is adding consideration to knowledge—we may be said comparatively to insure the production of the feelings which naturally correspond to them, and thus vastly to diminish, if not to destroy, the probability that they will fail of effecting any change in the conduct.

You know sufficiently well, that, if you obtain a knowledge of circumstances which may exert an influence over your temporal condition, you can, and in most cases you do, give those circumstances your close consideration, and ponder them with unwearied assiduousness, in hopes of extracting some directions for your guidance in life. And if you were to fail to add consideration to knowledge, you would fairly be regarded as the authors of every disaster which might follow on your not turning knowledge to account; and the bankruptcy, in which you might be speedily involved, would excite no commiseration, as being altogether chargeable on your own indolence and indifference. So that, if you have knowledge, it is reckoned quite your own fault, if it rest inertly in the mind, in place of stirring up emotions and regulating energies. Your fellow-men deal with you as with free agents, possessing the power of considering what they know, and therefore answerable for all the consequences of a want of consideration.

And what we wished impressed upon you at this stage of our discourse is, that you must expect the same dealing at the tribunal of the Almighty, as you thus experience at the hands of your

fellow-men. If it be once shown that you had the knowledge, you will be tried as beings who might have had the consideration. To recur to our illustration—you have a thorough knowledge that you must die. There passes not a day which does not, in some shape or other, present this fact to your observation, and call upon you, by emphatic demonstrations of human mortality, to acknowledge your own frailty. Ye cannot be so sure that any combination of circumstances will issue in the derangement and bankruptcy of your affairs, as ye are, that, at a period which cannot be very distant, ye will be withdrawn altogether from these affairs, and ushered into an untried existence. And if, because you have not fastened attention upon circumstances which threaten you with temporal calamity, you are reckoned as having only yourselves to blame when that calamity bursts, like an armed man, into your households, assuredly you must hereafter be treated as your own wilful destroyers if you make no preparation for that dreaded visitant whom no force can repulse, and no bribe allure, from your doors. We admit that much has been taught, and boasted, in respect to the free-agency of man, which will no more bear the test of experience than of Scripture. But we cannot doubt that man is sufficiently a free agent to make the path of death, in which he walks, the path of his own choice; so that, just as he is free to consider what he knows in reference to the matters of this life, so is he free to consider what he knows in reference to the matters of the next life.

And we give it you all as a warning, whose energy increases with your acquaintance with the truths of revelation, that God has gifted you with an apparatus of moral feelings, to the excitement of which the announcements of Scripture are most nicely adapted; and has thus so fitted the Bible to your constitution, that, if the Bible be known, and you unconcerned, there is evidence of wilful indifference, or determined opposition, which will suffice for procuring condemnation at the judgment. The fact that we must give account hereafter for every action, is, of all others, fitted to serve as a lever



which may raise into activity the powers of the inner man. But then it is consideration, and not mere knowledge, of such fact which converts it into the lever. Knowledge only introduces it into the mind. But when introduced, it will lie there idle and powerless, unless taken up and handled by consideration. And forasmuch as you have full power of giving consideration to the fact—for you can give your consideration to a fact of astronomy, or of chemistry; and therefore also, if you choose, to a fact of theology—you are clearly answerable for the ineffectiveness of the fact, if it never move the torpid energies; and can expect nothing but the being condemned at last, as having known, but not having considered.

But we have somewhat wandered from our text: at least, we have dwelt generally on the want of consideration, in place of confining ourselves to the instance which the passage exhibits. We go back to our proposition, that a fear of God will be the result of considering: "when I consider, I am afraid of him."

It is our earnest wish to bring the careless amongst you, those who have no dread of God, to a sense of the awfulness of that mysterious Being, whose existence indeed you confess, but of whom, notwithstanding, your whole life is one perpetual defiance. Your fault is, that, immersing yourselves in the business or pleasures of the world, you never sit down to a serious contemplation of your state: in other words, that, however intently you fasten your thoughts on vain and perishable objects, yet, as creatures who are just in the infancy of existence, you never consider. And we have but little hope of prevailing on you, by any urgency of remonstrance, to give yourselves to the considering what you know. We are too well aware that the prevailing on a man to consider his ways lies far beyond the power of human persuasion; seeing that the mind can evade all external control, and, if it do not bind itself, can defy every attempt to overrule or direct. But we can give you certain of those processes of thought which would almost necessarily be followed out, where there were deep and solemn musings upon

Deity. We may thus trace the connection asserted in our text between consideration and fear. Though this will not compel you to consider for yourselves, it will leave you with less excuse than ever if you rest content with mere knowledge; it will show you what ought to be going forward in your own minds, and thus take away the plea of ignorance, if any should be hardy enough to advance it.

With this object, we will examine how fear of God is produced by considering what we know of God, first in his nature, and secondly in his works.

Now we are all aware how powerful a restraint is imposed on the most dissolute and profane, by the presence of an individual who will not countenance them in their impieties. So long as they are under observation, they will not dare to yield to imperious desires: they must shrink into a solitude ere they will perpetrate crime, or give indulgence to lusts. We can feel confident in respect of the most worldly-minded amongst you, that, if there could be always at his side an individual of whom he stood in awe, and whose good opinion he was anxious to cultivate, he would abstain from many of his cherished gratifications, and walk, comparatively, a course of self-denial and virtue. He would be arrested in far the greater part of his purposes, if he knew that he was acting under the eye of this individual; and it would only be when assured that the inspection was suspended or withdrawn, that he would follow unreservedly the bent of his desires. But it is amongst the most surprising of moral phenomena, that the effect, which would be produced by a human inspector, is scarcely ever produced by a divine. If a man can elude the observation of his fellow-men, he straightway acts as though he had eluded all observation: place him where there is no other of his own race, and he will feel as if, in the strictest sense, alone. The remembrance that the eye of Deity is upon him, that the infinite God is continually at his side—so that there is absurdity in speaking of a solitude; every spot throughout the expansions of space being inhabited by the Almighty—this remembrance, we say, is without any practical effect; or rather

the fact, though universally known, is not considered; and therefore the man, though in contact with his Maker, fancies himself in loneliness, and acts as if certain of being unobserved.

But let consideration be superadded to knowledge, and there will necessarily be produced a fear or dread of the Creator. There is nothing so overwhelming to the mind, when giving itself to the contemplation of a great first cause, as the omnipresence of God. That, if I were endowed with unlimited powers of motion, so that in a moment I might traverse unnumbered leagues, I could never for a lonely instant escape from God; that he would remain at the spot I left, and yet be found at the spot I reached; of all truths this is perhaps the most bewildering and incomprehensible, seeing that, more than any other, it separates the Infinite Being from all finite. But let me consider this truth; let me, if it baffle my understanding, endeavor to keep it in active remembrance. Where-soever I am, and whatsoever I do, "thou, O God, seest me." Then it is not possible that the least item of my conduct may escape observation; that I can be so stealthy in my wickedness as to commit it undetected. Human laws are often severe in their enactments; but they may be often transgressed without discovery, and therefore with impunity. But there is no such possibility in regard to Divine laws. The Legislator himself is ever at my side. The murkiness of the midnight shrouds me not from him. The solitariness of the scene is no proof against his presence. The depths of my own heart lie open to his inspection. And thus every action, every word, every thought, is as distinctly marked as though there were none but myself in the universe, and all the watchfulness, and all the scrutiny of God, were employed on my deportment. What then? "when I consider, I am afraid of him." The more I reflect, the more awful God appears. To break the law in the sight of the law-giver; to brave the sentence in the face of the Judge; there is a hardihood in this which would seem to overpass the worst human presumption; and we can only say of the man who knows that he does this whensoever

he offends, that he knows, but does not consider.

Oh! we are sure that an abiding sense of God's presence would put such a restraint on the outgoings of wickedness, that, to make it universal were almost to banish impiety from the earth. We are sure that, if every man went to his business, or his recreation, fraught with the consciousness that the Being, who will decide his destiny for eternity, accompanies him in his every step, observes all his doings, and scrutinizes all his motives, an apprehension of the dreadfulness of the Almighty, and of the utter peril of violating his precepts, would take possession of the whole mass of society; and there would be a confession from all ranks and all ages, that, however they might have known God as the Omnipresent, and yet made light of his authority, when they considered God as the Omnipresent, they were overawed and afraid of him.

But again—it is not the mere feeling that God exercises a supervision over my actions, which will produce that dread of him which Job asserts in our text. The moral character of God will enter largely into considerations upon Deity, and vastly aggravate that fear which is produced by his omnipresence. Of course, it is not the certainty that a being sees me, which, of itself, will make me fear that being. There must be a further certainty, that the conduct to which I am prone is displeasing to him; and that, if persisted in, it will draw upon me his vengeance. Let me then consider God, and determine, from his necessary attributes, whether there can be hope that he will pass over without punishment, which cannot escape his observation.

We suppose God just, and we suppose him merciful; and it is in settling the relative claims of these properties, that men fancy they find ground for expecting impunity at the last. The matter to be adjusted is, how a being, confessedly love, can so yield to the demands of justice as to give up his creatures to torment; and the difficulty of the adjustment makes way for the flattering persuasion, that love will hereafter triumph over justice, and that threatenings, having answered their purpose in the moral government of God, will not be so rigidly exacted as



to interfere with the workings of unbounded compassion. But it is not by considering that men encourage themselves in the thought, that the claims of love and of justice will be found hereafter at variance, and that, in the contest between the two, those of love will prevail. Through not considering, men have hope in God; let them only consider, and we are bold to say they will be afraid of God.

If I do but reflect seriously on the love of my Maker, I must perceive it to be a disposition to produce the greatest amount of happiness, by upholding through the universe those principles of righteousness with whose overthrow misery stands indissolubly connected. But it is quite evident, that, when once evil has been introduced, this greatest amount of happiness is not that which would result from the unconditional pardon of every worker of evil. Such pardon would show the abandonment of the principles of righteousness, and therefore spread consternation and dismay amongst the unfallen members of God's intelligent household. A benevolence which should set aside justice, would cease to be benevolence: it would be nothing but a weakness, which, in order to snatch a few from deserved misery, overturned the laws of moral government, and exposed myriads to anarchy and wretchedness. And yet further—unless God be faithful to his threatenings, I have no warrant for believing that he will be faithful to his promises; if he deny himself in one, he ceases to be God, and there is an end of all reasonable hope that he will make good the other.

So that however, on a hasty glance, and forming my estimate of benevolence from the pliancy of human sympathies, which are wrought on by a tear, and not proof against complaint, I may think that the love of the Almighty will forbid the everlasting misery of any of his creatures; let me consider, and the dreamy expectation of a weak and womanish tenderness will give place to apprehension and dread. I consider; and I see that, if God be not true to his word, he confounds the distinctions between evil and good, destroys his own sovereignty, and shakes the foundations of happiness through the universe. I consider; and I perceive that to let

go unvisited the impenitent, would be to forfeit the character of a righteous moral governor, and to proclaim to every rank of intelligence, in all the circuits of immensity, that law was abolished, and disobedience made safe. I consider; and I observe that a love, which triumphed over justice, could not be the love of a perfect being; for the love of a perfect being, whatever its yearnings over myself, must include love of justice; so that I trust to what God cannot feel, when I trust to a compassion which cannot allow punishment.

And thus, when I consider there is no resting-place for the spirit in the flattering delusion, that, in the moment of terrible extremity, when the misdoings of a long life shall have given in their testimony, mercy will interpose between justice and the criminal, and ward off the blow, and welcome to happiness. Every attribute of Deity, benevolence itself as well as justice, and holiness, and truth, rises against the delusion, and warns me that to cherish it is to go headlong to destruction. The theory that God is too loving to take vengeance, will not bear being considered. The notion that the judge will prove less rigid than the lawgiver, will not bear being considered. The opinion that the purposes of a moral government may have been answered by the threatening, so as not to need the infliction, will not bear being considered. And therefore, if I have accustomed myself to such a representation of Deity as makes benevolence, falsely so called, the grave of every other attribute; and if, allured by such representation, I have quieted anxiety, and kept down the pleadings of conscience; consideration will scatter the delusion, and gird me round with terrors; whilst I look only on the surface of things, I may be confident, but when I consider, I am afraid.

Oh! it is not, as some would persuade you, the dream of gloomy and miscalculating men, that a punishment, the very mention of which curdles the blood and makes the limbs tremble, awaits, through the long hereafter, those who set at naught the atonement effected by Christ. It is not the picture of a diseased imagination, nursed in error and trammelled by enthusiasm,

that of God, who now plies us with the overtures of forgiveness, coming forth with all the artillery of wrath, and dealing out vengeance on those who have "done despite to the spirit of grace." We bring the dream to the rigid investigations of wakefulness; we expose the picture to the microscopes of the closest meditation; and when men would taunt us with our belief in unutterable torments, portioned out by a Creator who loves, (with a love surpassing language,) the very meanest of his creatures; and when they would smile at our credulity in supposing that God can act in a manner so repugnant to his confessed nature; we retort on them at once the charge of adopting an unsupported theory. We tell them, that, if with them we could escape from thought, and smother reflection, then with them we might give harborage to the soothing persuasion that there is no cause for dread, and that God is of too yearning a compassion to resign aught of humankind to be broken on the wheel or scathed by the fire. But it is in proportion as the mind fastens itself upon God that alarm is excited. Thought, in place of dissipating, generates terror. And thus, paralyze my reason, debar me from every exercise of intellect, reduce me to the idiot, and I shall be careless and confident: but leave me the equipment and use of mental faculties, and "when I consider, I am afraid of him."

But the connection between consideration and fear will be yet more evident, if the works of God engage our attention. We have hitherto considered only the nature of God. But if we now meditate on either creation or redemption, under which two divisions we may class the works of God, we shall find additional proof of the truth of the saying, "when I consider, I am afraid of him."

Now we readily admit that a fear, or dread, of the Almighty is not the feeling ordinarily excited by the magnificence of the heavens, or the loveliness of a landscape. It most frequently happens, unless the mind be so morally deadened as to receive no impressions from the splendid panorama, that sentiments of warm admiration, and of confidence in God as the benignant Parent of the universe, are elicited by

exhibitions of creative wisdom and might. And we are enough from designing to assert, that the exhibitions are not calculated to produce such sentiments. We think that the broad and varied face of nature serves as a mirror, in which the christian may trace much that is most endearing in the character of his Maker. We should reckon it fair evidence against the piety of an individual, if he could gaze on the stars in their courses, or travel over the provinces of this globe, and mark with what profusion all that can minister to human happiness is scattered around, and yet be conscious of no ascendings of heart towards that benevolent Father who hath given to man so glorious a dwelling, and overarched it with so brilliant a canopy. Where there is a devout spirit, we are sure that the placing a man whence he may look forth on some majestic development of scenery, on luxuriant valleys, and the amphitheatre of mountains, and the windings of rivers, is the placing him where he will learn a new lesson in theology, and grow warmer in his love of that Eternal Being "who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth."

But we speak now of what is adapted to the producing fear of God in the careless and unconverted man: and we say that it is only through want of consideration that such fear is not excited by the works of creation. The unconverted man, as well as the converted, can take delight in the beauties of nature, and be conscious of ecstasy of spirit, as his eye gathers in the wonders of the material universe. But the converted man, whilst the mighty picture is before him, and the sublime features and the lovely successively fasten his admiration, considers who spread out the landscape and gave it its splendor; and from such consideration he derives fresh confidence in the God whom he feels to be his God, pledged to uphold him, and supply his every want. The unconverted man, on the contrary, will either behold the architecture without giving a thought to the architect; or, observing how exquisite a regard for his well-being may be traced in the arrangements of creation, will strengthen himself in his appeal to the compassions of Deity, by



the tender solitudes of which he can thus prove himself the subject. If he gather any feeling from the spreadings of the landscape, beyond that high-wrought emotion which is wakened by the noble combinations of rock, and lake, and cloud, and forest—just as though all the poetry of the soul were responding to some melodious and magnificent summons—it is only the feeling that God is immeasurably benevolent; and that, having been so careful of man's happiness in time, he will not abandon him to wretchedness through eternity.

But we should like to bring this romantic and Arcadian theology to the test of consideration. We believe, that, if we could make the man consider, he would not be encouraged by the tokens of loving-kindness with which all nature is charactered, to continue the life of indifference or dissoluteness. There are two ideas which seem to us furnished by the works of creation, when duly considered. The first is, that nothing can withstand God; the second, that nothing can escape him. When I muse on the stupendousness of creation; when I think of countless worlds built out of nothing by the simple word of Jehovah; my conviction is that God must be irresistible, so that the opposing him is the opposing Omnipotence. But if I cannot withstand God, I may possibly escape him. Insignificant as I am, an inconsiderable unit on an inconsiderable globe, may I not be overlooked by this irresistible Being, and thus, as it were, be sheltered by my littleness? If I would answer this question, let me consider creation in its minutest departments. Let me examine the least insect, the animated thing of a day and an atom. How it glows with deity! How busy has God been with polishing the joints, and feathering the wings, of this almost imperceptible recipient of life! How carefully has he attended to its every want, supplying profusely whatever can gladden its ephemeral existence! Dare I think this tiny insect overlooked by God? Wonderful in its structure, beautiful in its raiment of the purple and the gold and the crimson, surrounded abundantly by all that is adapted to the cravings of its nature, can I fail to regard it as fashioned by the skill, and

watched by the providence, of him who "meted out heaven with a span, and measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?" It were as easy to persuade me, when considering, that the archangel, moving in majesty and burning with beauty, is overlooked by God, as that this insect, liveried as it is in splendor and throned in plenty, is unobserved by Him who alone could have formed it.

And if the least of animated things be thus subject to the inspections of God, who or what shall escape those inspections, and be screened by its insignificance? Till I consider, I may fancy, that, occupied with the affairs of an unbounded empire, our Maker can give nothing more than a general attention to the inhabitants of a solitary planet; and that consequently an individual like myself may well hope to escape the severity of his scrutiny. But when I consider, I go from the planet to the atom. I pass from the population of this globe, in the infancy of their immortality, to the breathing particles which must perish in the hour of their birth. And I cannot find that the atom is overlooked. I cannot find that one of its fleeting tenantry is unobserved and uncared for. I consider then; but consideration scatters the idea, that, because I am but the insignificant unit of an insignificant race, "God will not see, neither will the Holy One of Israel regard." And thus, by considering the works of creation, I reach the persuasion that nothing can escape God, just as before that nothing can withstand him. What then will be the feeling which consideration generates in reference to God? I consider God as revealed by creation; and he appears before me with a might which can crush every offender, and with a scrutiny which can detect every offence. Oh then, if it be alike impossible to resist God, and to conceal from God, is he not a being of whom to stand in awe; and shall I not again confess, that "when I consider, I am afraid of him?"

We would just observe, in order to the completeness of this portion of our argument, that it must be want of consideration which makes us read only God's love in the works of creation. We say of the man who infers nothing

but the benevolence of Deity from the firmament and the landscape, just as though no other attribute were graven on the encompassing scenery, that he contents himself with a superficial glance, or blinds himself to the traces of wrath and devastation. That we live in a disorganized section of the universe; that our globe has been the scene and subject of mighty convulsions; we hold these facts to be as legible in the lineaments of nature, as that "the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." There is a vast deal in the appearances of the earth, and in the phenomena of the elements, to assure us that evil has been introduced amongst us, and has already provoked the vengeance of God. So that a considering man, if he make the visible creation the object of his reflection, will reach the conclusion, that, whatever may be the compassions of his Maker, he can interfere for the punishment of iniquity—a conclusion which at once dissipates the hope, that the love of God will mitigate, if not remove, deserved penalties, and which therefore strengthens our proof that, when we consider, we shall be afraid of God.

But we have yet, in the last place, to speak briefly on the noblest of God's works, the work of redemption. Is it possible that, if I consider this work, I shall be afraid of God? We premise that, throughout our discourse, we have endeavored to deal with popular delusions, and to show you how consideration, superadded to knowledge, would rouse the careless and indifferent. We have maintained, all along, that the mere knowledge of truths may lie inertly in the mind, or furnish ground-work for some false and flattering hypothesis. But this is saying nothing against the worth or tendency of these truths; it is wholly directed against the not considering what we know. Thus the question with respect to redemption is simply, whether this scheme, as known by the mass of men, may not lull those fears of God which ought to be stirring in their breasts; and whether this scheme, as considered, would not make them afraid of God? We learn from the Epistles, that there may be such a thing as continuing in sin that grace may abound—a fact

which sufficiently shows that redemption may be abused; and if abused, it is, we argue, through not being considered.

It is our duty, as a minister of the Gospel of Christ, to dwell largely on the love which God feels towards sinners, and to point continually to the demonstration of that love in the gift of his only and well-beloved Son. We cannot speak in over-wrought terms of the readiness of the Almighty to forgive, and of the amplitude of the atonement effected by the Mediator. We are charged with the offer of pardon to the whole mass of human kind: enough that a being is man, and we are instructed to beseech him to be reconciled to God. And a glorious truth it is, that no limitations are placed on the proffered forgiveness; but that, Christ having died for the world, the world, in all its departments and generations, may take salvation "without money and without price." We call it a glorious truth, because there is thus every thing to encourage the meanest and unworthiest, if they will close with the offer, and accept deliverance in the one appointed way. But then it is quite possible that the gospel offers, thus cheering to the humble and contrite, may be wrested into an encouragement to the obdurate and indifferent. Men may know that God has so loved them as to give his Son to die for them; and then, through not considering, may imagine that a love thus stupendously displayed, can never permit the final wretchedness of its objects. The scheme of redemption, though itself the most thrilling homily against sin, may be viewed by those who would fain build on the uncovenanted mercies of God, as proving a vast improbability that creatures, so beloved as ourselves, and purchased at so inconceivable a price, will ever be consigned to the ministry of vengeance. Hence, because they know the fact of this redemption, the careless amongst you have hope in God; but, if they considered this fact, they would be afraid of him.

There is nothing which, when deeply pondered, is more calculated to excite fears of God, than that marvellous interposition on our behalf which is the alone basis of legitimate hope. When I consider redemption, what a picture of God's hatred of sin rises before me;



what an exhibition of his resolve to allow justice to exact all its claims. The smoking cities of the plain; the deluged earth with its overwhelmed population; the scattered Jews, strewn the globe like the fragments of a mighty shipwreck—nothing can tell me so emphatically as Christ dying, “the just for the unjust,” how God abhors sin, and how determined he is to punish sin. And if God could deal so awfully and terribly with his own Son, when bearing the weight of imputed transgression, will he spare me—oh, it is as though he loved me better than his Son—if I appear before him with the burden of unrepented sins; if, perverting his efforts to turn me from iniquity into encouragements to brave all his threatenings, I build on the atonement whilst I break the commandments? I consider God as manifested in redemption; he shows himself a holy God, and therefore do I fear him. He displays his determination to take vengeance, and therefore do I fear him. He exhibits the fixed principles of his moral government, and therefore do I fear him. He bids the sword awake against his fellow, and therefore do I fear him. He writes the condemnation of the impenitent in the blood which cleanses those who believe, and therefore do I fear him. Oh, I might cast a hasty glance at the scheme of redemption, and observe little more than the unmeasured loving-kindness which it manifests. I might gather from it the preciousness of the human soul in God’s sight, a preciousness so vast that its loss must be a catastrophe at which the universe shudders, seeing its redemption was effected amid the throes and convulsions of nature. And this might confirm me in the delusion that I may sin with impunity. But let me reflect on the scheme, and God is before me, robed in awfulness and clothed with judgment, vindicating the majesty of his insulted law and relaxing not one tittle of its penalties, bearing out to the letter the words of the prophet, “the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies;” and therefore it must be with redemption, as it is with creation. “When I consider, I am afraid of him.”

And now, brethren, what words shall we use of you but these of Moses, “O

that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end?” We simply wish to bring you to consider; and then, we believe, you will both discover what is duty, and determine to follow it.

This is the sum of what we have to urge in respect to the charity which now solicits your support. Consider what is your duty towards your benighted countrymen, and we have no fears of your failing to be liberal in your contribution. It is only through the not considering, the not considering that you are merely stewards of your property, the not considering that Christ is to be ministered to in the persons of the destitute, the not considering that “he that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord;” it is only from such causes as these, so palpable and urgent is the duty, that you can fail to give hearty support to the institution which now appeals to your bounty. The exclusive object of the Irish Society is to communicate religious knowledge to the peasantry of Ireland through the medium of the Irish language. There are nearly three millions of individuals in Ireland who can speak the Irish language; and of these, at least five hundred thousand can speak no other. There are five hundred thousand of your countrymen, to whom the Hebrew tongue would be as intelligible as the English; and who can no more be approached through the medium of our national speech, than the rude Hottentot or the Arab of the desert. And this is not all. There are indeed hundreds, and thousands in Ireland, who understand and speak the English tongue as well as the Irish; but it does not follow that they are as ready to receive religious instruction through the one as through the other. The case is just the reverse. I cannot express to you the attachment, the devoted and even romantic attachment, which an Irish-speaking peasant has for his native dialect. It is a chivalrous attachment. It is even a superstitious attachment. He believes that no heretic can learn Irish, and that consequently nothing but truth can be written or spoken in Irish. And thus, if you will only take advantage of his prejudices, you can at once induce him to receive and read the Holy Scriptures. Give

him an English Bible, and he will scarcely dare open it, because pronounced heretical by his priest. But give him an Irish Bible, and no menaces can induce its surrender; the book is in Irish, and he knows therefore that it cannot contain heresy. And does not this demonstrate the importance of employing the Irish language as a vehicle for the communication of religious instruction; and does not a Society, which is acting through this language, come before you with special claims on your liberal support?

I turn to Ireland, and I perceive that nature has done much for that which poetry calls the emerald isle of the ocean. There is fertility in her soil, and majesty in her mountains, and luxuriance in her valleys, and a loveliness in her lakes, which makes them rivals to those in which Italian skies glass their deep azure. And the character of her children is that of a lofty and generous heroism; for I believe not that there is a nation under heaven, possessing more of the elements than belong to the Irish, of what is bold, and disinterested, and liberal. And without question it is a phenomenon, at which we may well be startled and amazed, to behold Ireland, in spite of the advantages to which I have referred, in spite of her close alliance with the home and mistress of arts and liberty, torn by intestine factions, and harassed by the feuds and commotions of her tenantry. Of such phenomenon the solution would be hopeless, if we did not know that Ireland is oppressed by a bigoted faith, bestrid by that giant corrupter of Christianity, who knows, and acts on the knowledge, that to enlighten ignorance were to overthrow his empire. It is because Ireland is morally benighted that she is physically degraded; and the engines which must be turned on her, to raise her to her due rank in the scale of nations, are religious rather than political; she can be thoroughly civilized only by being thoroughly christianized.

And certainly, if there were ever a time when it was incumbent upon protestants to labor at spreading the pure Gospel through Ireland, this is that time. Popery is making unparalleled efforts to expel protestantism altogether. Shall then the protestantism of

England stand tamely by, as though it had no interest in the struggle? We are persuaded, on the contrary, that, as protestants, you will feel it alike your duty, and your privilege, to aid to the best of your ability institutions which provide a scriptural instruction for the peasantry of Ireland. And whilst we gladly confess that other societies have labored vigorously and successfully for this great object, we think, from the reasons already advanced, that none employs a more admirable agency than that for which we plead; and therefore are we earnest in entreating for it your liberal support. The Irish Society will bear being considered; we ask you to consider its claims, and we feel confident you will acknowledge their urgency.

I cannot add more. I may have already detained you too long; but I know not when I may speak again in this place; and I desire, ere I go, to have proof, from your zeal for the souls of others, that you are anxious in regard to your own salvation. We must fear of many amongst you, that they hear sermons, but do not consider. Companions die around them, but they do not consider. They meet funerals as they walk the streets, but they do not consider. They are warned by sickness and affliction, but they do not consider. They feel that age is creeping upon them, but they do not consider. What shall we say to you? Will ye continue to give cause for the application to yourselves of those touching words of God by his prophet, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider?" Preachers cannot make you consider. They exhort you, they entreat you, they tell you of a Savior, and of the utter ruin of going on still in your wickedness. But they cannot make you consider. You must consider for yourselves: you must, for yourselves, ask God's Spirit to aid you in considering. Would that you might consider; for when the trumpet is sounding, and the dead are stirring, you will be forced to consider, though it will be too late for consideration to produce any thing but unmingled terror—Oh, can you tell me the agony of being compelled to exclaim at the judgment, "when I consider, I am afraid of Him?"



## SERMON.

## THE TWO SONS.

“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, Sir, and went not.”—St. Matthew, 21 : 28, 29, 30.

Our Savior had such knowledge of the human heart, and such power of expressing that knowledge, that he frequently gives us, in one or two bold outlines, descriptions of great classes into which the world, or the church, may be divided. There is no more remarkable instance of this than the parable of the sower, with which we may suppose you all well acquainted. In that parable Christ furnishes descriptions of four classes of the hearers of the Gospel, each description being brief, and fetched from the character of the soil on which the sower cast his seed. But the singularity is, that these four classes include the whole mass of hearers, so that, when combined, they make up either the world or the church. You cannot imagine any fifth class. For in every man who is brought within sound of the Gospel, the seed must be as that by the wayside, which is quickly carried away, or as that on shallow soil where the roots cannot strike, or as that among thorns which choke all the produce, or finally, as that which, falling on a well-prepared place, yields fruit abundantly. You may try to find hearers who come not under any one of these descriptions, but you will not succeed; whilst, on the other hand, the world has never yet presented an assemblage of mixed hearers, which might not be resolved into these four divisions. And we regard it

as an extraordinary evidence of the sagacity, if the expression be lawful, of our Lord, of his superhuman penetration, and of his marvellous facility in condensing volumes into sentences, that he has thus furnished, in few words, a sketch of the whole world in its every age, and given us, within the compass of a dozen lines, the moral history of our race, as acted on by the preaching of the Gospel.

We make this reference to the parable of the sower, because we consider it rivalled in its comprehensiveness, and the unvarying accuracy of its descriptions, by the portion of Holy Writ on which we now purpose to discourse. We do not mean that the two sons can represent the whole world, or the whole church, in the same manner or degree as the four classes of hearers. There would manifestly be a contradiction in this; for if there be four parts into which the whole may be divided, it were absurd to contend for the equal propriety of a division into two. But we nevertheless believe that two very large classes of persons, subsisting in every age of the church, are represented by the two sons, and that, therefore, in delivering the parable before us, as well as that of the sower, Christ displayed his more than human acquaintance with mankind, and his power of delineating, by the simplest

figures, the reception of his Gospel to the very end of time. All this, however, will become more evident, as we proceed with the exposition of the passage, and show you, as we think to do, that centuries have made no difference in the faithfulness of the sketch.

You will observe that the parable, or illustration, or real history—for it matters little which term you assign to this portion of Scripture—is introduced by our Lord, whilst holding a discourse with the priests and elders in the temple. They had come round him, demanding by what authority he acted—as though he had not given sufficiently clear proof that his mission was from God. Where the demand was so unreasonable, Jesus would not vouchsafe a direct answer. He therefore made his reply conditional on their telling him whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men. He thus brought them into a dilemma from which no sophistry could extricate them. If they allowed the divine character of John's baptism, they laid themselves open to the charge of gross inconsistency, in not having believed him, and in denying the Messiahship of him whom he heralded. But if, on the other hand, they uttered what they really thought, and affirmed John's baptism to have been of men, they felt that they should excite the multitude against themselves, inasmuch as the people held the Baptist for a prophet. They therefore thought it most prudent to pretend ignorance, and to declare themselves unable to decide whence the baptism was. Hence, the condition on which Christ had promised to answer their question not having been fulfilled, they could not press him with any further inquiry, but remained in the position of disappointed and baffled antagonists.

It consisted not however with the Savior's character, that he should content himself with gaining a triumph over opponents, as though he had reasoned only for the sake of display. He had severely mortified his bitterest enemies, by turning their weapons against themselves, and bringing them into a strait in which they were exposed to the contempt of the bystanders. But it was their good which he sought;

and when, therefore, he had silenced them, he would not let slip the opportunity of setting before them their condition, and adding another warning to the many which had been uttered in vain. The declaration of ignorance in regard to John's baptism, suggested the course which his remonstrance should take, according to his well-known custom of allowing the occasion to furnish the topic of his preaching. He delivers the parable which forms our subject of discourse, and immediately follows it up by the question, "whether of them twain did the will of his father?" There was no room here for either doubt or evasion. It was so manifest that the son, who had refused at first, but who had afterwards repented and gone to the vineyard, was more obedient than the other, who had made a profession of willingness, but never redeemed his promise, that even priests and elders could not avoid giving a right decision. And now Christ showed what his motive had been in delivering the parable, and proposing the question; for so soon as he had obtained their testimony in favor of the first son, he said to them, "Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

We gather at once, from this startling and severe saying, that, by the second son in the parable, Christ intended the leading men among the Jews, and, by the first, those despised and profligate ranks with which pharisees and scribes would not hold the least intercourse. The publicans and harlots, as he goes on to observe, had received John the Baptist; for numbers had repented at his preaching. But the priests and elders, according to their own confession just made, had not acknowledged him as coming from God, and had not been brought by him to amendment of life. And this was precisely the reverse of what the profession of the several parties had given right to expect. The priests and elders, making a great show of religion, and apparently eager expectants of the promised Messiah, seemed only to require to be directed to the vineyard, and they would immediately and cheerfully go. On the other hand, the pub-



licans and harlots, persons of grossly immoral and profligate habits, might be said to declare, by their lives, an obstinate resolve to continue in disobedience, so that, if told to go work in the vineyard, their answer would be a contemptuous refusal. Yet when the matter came to be put to the proof, the result was widely different from what appearances had promised. The great men amongst the Jews, whose whole profession was that of parties waiting to know, that they might perform, God's will, were bidden by the Baptist to receive Jesus as their Savior; but, notwithstanding all their promises, they treated him as a deceiver, and would not join themselves to his disciples. The same message was delivered to the publicans and harlots; but these, whatever the reluctance which they manifested at first, came in crowds to hear Jesus, and took by force the kingdom of heaven. And all this was aptly illustrated by the parable before us. The great men were the second son; for they had said, "I go, sir," and yet they went not: the publicans and harlots were the first son; for though, when bidden, they refused, yet afterwards they repented and went.

Such was evidently the import and design of the parable, as originally delivered by Jesus. It is possible indeed that there may have been also a reference to the Jew and the Gentile; the two sons representing, as they elsewhere do, these two great divisions of mankind. The Jews, as a nation, were aptly figured by the second son, the Gentiles by the first. Both had the same father—seeing that, however close the union between God and the Jews, and however the Gentiles had been left, for centuries, to themselves, there was no difference in origin, inasmuch as the whole race had the same Lord for its parent. And the Jews stood ready to welcome their Messiah; whereas little could be expected from the Gentiles, sunk as they were in ignorance and superstition, but that, if directed to a Savior, they would treat with contempt the free offer of life. Here again however the event was the reverse of the expectation. The Gospel made little way amongst the Jews, where there had been every promise of a cordial reception; but rapidly overran the

Gentile world, where there had seemed least likelihood of its gaining any ground. So that once more the parable, if taken in the light of a prophecy, was accurately fulfilled. The Jew, as the second son, had promised to go and work in the vineyard, and then never went: the Gentile, as the first son, had peremptorily refused, but afterwards saw his error, and repented, and obeyed.

But whilst there may be great justice in thus giving the parable a rational, or temporary application, our chief business is to treat it, according to our introductory remarks, as descriptive of two classes in every age of the church. It is this which we shall now proceed to do, believing that it furnishes, in a more than common degree, the material of interesting and instructive discourse.

Now it is a very frequent image in Scripture, that which represents the Church of Christ as a vineyard, and ourselves as laborers who have been hired to work in that vineyard. We shall not, on the present occasion, enlarge on this image, nor take pains to show you its beauty and fidelity. We shall find enough to engage us in the other parts of the parable, and may therefore assume what you are probably all prepared to admit. We go then at once to the message which is delivered to each of the sons, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." It is precisely the message, which, Sabbath after Sabbath, is uttered in God's name by the ordained ministers of Christ. We are never at liberty to make you any offers for to-morrow, but must always tell you, that, "if to-day you will hear his voice," he is ready to receive you into the vineyard of his church. And it is not to a life of inactivity and idleness that we are bidden to summon you, not to that inert dependence on the merits of another, which shall exclude all necessity for personal striving. We call you, on the contrary, to work in the vineyard. If you think to be saved without labor; if you imagine, that, because Christ has done all that is necessary, in the way of merit, there remains nothing to be done by yourselves in the way of condition, you are yielding to a delusion which must be as wilful as it

will be fatal—the whole tenor of Scripture unreservedly declaring, that, if you would enter into life, you must “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” And thus the message, “Son, go work to-day in my vineyard,” is, in every respect, that which God is continually addressing to you through the mouth of his ministering servants, a message declaratory that “now is the accepted time,” and requiring you to put forth every energy that you may escape “the wrath to come.”

And now the question is, as to the reception with which this message meets; and whether there be not two great classes of its hearers who are accurately represented by the two sons in the parable. We do not pretend to affirm, as we have already intimated, that the whole mass of unconverted men may fairly be resolved under the two divisions thus figuratively drawn. We are well aware of the prevalence of an indifference and apathy, which can hardly be roused to any kind of answer, either to a specious promise, made only to be broken, or to a harsh refusal which may perhaps be turned into compliance. But without pretending to include all under these divisions, we may and do believe that the multitude is very large which may be thus defined and classified. We suppose, that, after all, most way is made by the preachers of the Gospel when there seems least prospect of success; and that, as it was in the days when Christ was on earth, those who promise fairest give most disappointment, whilst the harvest is reaped where we looked only for sterility. This however is a matter which should be carefully examined, and we shall therefore employ the remainder of our discourse in considering separately the cases of the two sons, beginning with that of the second, who said, “I go, sir, and went not,” and then proceeding to that of the first, who said, “I will not, but afterward he repented, and went.”

Now there is in many men a warmth of natural feeling, and a great susceptibility, which make them promising subjects for any stirring and touching appeal. They are easily excited; and both their fears and sympathies will readily answer to a powerful address, or a sorrowful narrative. They are not

made of that harsh stuff which seems the predominant element in many men's constitutions; but, on the contrary, are yielding and malleable, as though the moral artificer might work them, without difficulty, into what shape he would. We are well convinced that there are many who answer this description in every congregation, and therefore in the present. It is far from our feeling, that, when we put forth all our earnestness in some appeal to the conscience, or come down upon you with our warmest entreaty, that you would accept the deliverance proposed by the Gospel, we are heard on all sides with coldness and indifference. We have quite the opposite feeling. We do not doubt, that, as the appeal goes forward, and the entreaty is pressed, there are some who are conscious of a warmth of sentiment, and a melting of heart; and in whom there is excited so much of a determination to forsake sin, and obey God, that, if we could ply each with the command, “go, work to-day in my vineyard,” we should receive a promise of immediate compliance.”

It is not that these men or these women are undergoing a change of heart, though there may be that in the feelings thus excited, which, fairly followed out, would lead to a thorough renovation. It is only that they are made of a material on which it is very easy to work; but which, alas, if it have great facility in receiving impressions, may have just as much in allowing them to be effaced. And what is done by a faithful sermon is done also by providential dispensations, when God addresses these parties through some affliction or bereavement. If you visit them, when death has entered their households, you find nothing of the harshness and reserve of sullen grief; but all that openness to counsel, and all that readiness to own the mercy of the judgment which seem indicative of such a softening of the heart as promises to issue in its genuine conversion. If you treat the chastisement under which they labor as a message from God, and translate it thus into common language, “Son, go work to-day in my vineyard,” you meet with no signs of dislike or reluctance, but rather with a ready assent that you give the true meaning, and with a frank resolution that God shall not speak in vain.



We put it to yourselves to determine whether we are not describing a common case; whether, if you could dissect our congregations, you would not find a large mass of persons who seem quite accessible to moral attack; whom you may easily startle by a close address to the conscience, or overcome by a pathetic and plaintive description; and on whom when affliction falls, it falls with that subduing and penetrating power which gives room for hope that it will bring them to repentance. And wheresoever these cases occur, they may evidently, so far as we have gone, be identified with that of the second son in the parable; for whilst the address to the parties is one which urges to the working in the vineyard, their answer has all the promise, and all the respectfulness, contained in the "I go, sir," of our text.

But the accuracy of the delineation does not end here. We must follow these excited listeners from the place of assembling, and these subdued mourners from the scene of affliction. Alas, how soon is it apparent that what is easily roused may be as easily lulled; and that you have only to remove the incumbent weight, and the former figure is regained. The men who have been all attention to the preacher, whom he seemed to have brought completely under command, so that they were ready to follow him whithersoever he would lead, settle back into their listlessness when the stimulant of the sermon is withdrawn; and those, whom the fires of calamity appeared to have melted, harden rapidly into their old constitution when time has somewhat damped the intenseness of the flame. The melancholy truth is, that the whole assault has been on their natural sensibilities, on their animal feelings; and that nothing like spiritual solicitude has been produced, whether by the sermon or the sorrow. They have given much cause for hope, seeing they have displayed susceptibility, and thus shown themselves capable of moral impressions. But they have disappointed expectation, because they have taken no pains to distinguish between an instinct of nature and a work of God's Spirit, or rather, because they have allowed their feelings to evaporate in the forming a resolution, and have not set them-

selves prayerfully to the carrying it into effect. And thus it comes to pass that men, on whom preaching seemed to have taken great hold, as though they were moved by the terrors, and animated by the hopes of christianity; or whom the visitations of Providence appeared to have brought to humility and contrition; make no advances in the religion of the heart, but falsify the hopes which those who wish their salvation have ventured to cherish. And when surprise is expressed, and the reason is demanded, the only reply is, that there is yet a large class in the world, too faithfully delineated by the second son, who, when bidden by his father to go work in the vineyard, answered, "I go, sir," and went not.

You may think, however, that we have not adduced precisely the case intended by the parable, inasmuch as these susceptible, but unstable, persons are not of the same class with the chief priests and elders. The second son was originally designed to denote the leading men among the Jews; and, therefore, in seeking his present representatives, we seem bound to look for similarity to those to whom Christ addressed the parable. This is so far true, that, although it impeaches not the accuracy of what has been advanced, it makes it necessary for us to continue our examination, lest we bring within too narrow limits the class of men described.

We have already hinted that there lie the greatest obstacles to the reception of the Gospel, where, at first, we might have hoped for most rapid success. Thus with the chief priests and Pharisees. There was the most rigid attention to all the externals of religion, a professed readiness to submit to the revealed will of God, and an apparent determination to receive Christ, so soon as he should be manifested. Yet all this, as we have shown you, was nothing more than the saying, "I go, sir;" for when Christ actually came, they were displeased at his lowliness, and would not join him as their King and their Savior. And we are bound to say that we know not more unpromising subjects for the preaching of the Gospel, than those who are punctiliously attentive to the forms of religion, and who attach a worth and a merit to their

careful performance of certain moral duties. We cannot have a more unpalatable truth to deliver—but wo is unto us if we dare to keep it back—than that which exposes the utter insufficiency of the best human righteousness, and which tells men, who are amiable and charitable, and moral and upright, that, with all their excellencies, they may be further from the kingdom of heaven than the dissolute whom they regard with absolute loathing. The immediate feeling is, that we confound virtue and vice; and that, allowing no superiority to what is lovely and of good report, we represent God as indifferent to moral conduct, and thus undermine the foundations on which society rests. But we are open to no such charge. We are quite alive to the beauty and advantageousness of that moral excellence which does not spring from a principle of religion, nay, which may even oppose the admission of the peculiar doctrines of christianity. There is not a man for whom we have a greater feeling of interest, because there is not one of whom naturally we have a greater admiration, than for him who is passing through life with an unblemished reputation, sedulously attentive to all the relative duties, and taking generously the lead in efforts to ameliorate the condition of his fellows, but who, all the while, has no consciousness of his own sinfulness, and who therefore rests on his own works, and not on Christ's merits. If you compare this man with a dissolute character, one who is outraging the laws of society and the feelings of humanity; and if you judge the two merely with reference to the present scene of being; why, there is the widest possible difference; and to speak of the one as equally depraved, and equally vile, with the other, would be an overcharged statement, carrying its own confutation.

But what is there to prove that there may not be just as much rebellion against God in the one case as in the other; and that the man whose whole deportment is marked by what is praiseworthy and beneficial, may not be as void of all love towards the Author of his being, as he who, by his vices and villany, draws upon himself the execrations of a neighborhood? Try men as

members of society, and they are as widely separated as the poles of the earth. But try them as God's creatures, not their own, but "bought with a price," and you may bring them to the same level, or even prove the moral and amiable further alienated than the dissolute and repulsive. Yes, further alienated. It is a hard saying, but we cannot pare it away. These upright and charitable men, on whom a world is lavishing its applause, how will they receive us, when we come and tell them that they are sinners, who have earned for themselves eternal destruction; and that they are no more secured against the ruin by their rectitude and philanthropy, than if they were the slaves of every vice, and the patrons of every crime? May we not speak of, at least, a high probability, that they will be disgusted at a statement which makes so light of their excellence; and that they will turn away from the doctrines of the Gospel, as too humiliating to be true, or as only constructed for the very refuse of mankind?

Oh, we again say that we hardly know a more hopeless task than that of bringing the Gospel to bear on an individual who is entrenched about with self-righteousness. If we are dealing with the openly immoral man, we can take the thunders of the law, and batter at his conscience. We know well enough, that, in his case, there is a voice within which answers to the voice from without; and that, however he may harden himself against our remonstrance, there is, at least, no sophistry by which he can persuade himself that he is not a sinner. This is a great point secured: we occupy a vantage-ground, from which we may direct, with full power, all our moral artillery. But when we deal with the man who is amiable, and estimable, and exemplary, but who, nevertheless, is a stranger to the motives of the Gospel, our very first assertion—for this must be our first; we cannot advance a step till this preliminary is felt and conceded—the assertion, that the man is a sinner, deserving only hell, arms against us his every antipathy, and is almost certain to call up such a might of opposition, that we are at once repulsed as unworthy further hearing.



And how agrees this too frequent ease with the sketching of our parable? We look upon men, whose virtues make them the ornaments of society, and whose zealous attention to the various duties of life deservedly secures them respect and esteem. You would gather from their deportment, from their apparent readiness to discharge faithfully every known obligation, that the setting before them what God requires at their hands would suffice to secure their unwearied obedience. If you say to them, in the name of the Almighty, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard," their answer, as furnished by all that seeming desire to act rightly which has forced itself on your attention, is one of sincere and hearty compliance. But so soon as they come to know what working in the vineyard means, alas, it is with them as it was with the pharisees and scribes, who, with every profession that they waited for Messiah, no sooner saw him "without form or comeliness," than they scornfully refused to give him their allegiance. These self-righteous men are ready enough to work, because it is by works of their own that they think to gain heaven. But when they find that their great work is to be the renouncing their own works, and that the vineyard, in which you invite them to labor, is one in which man's chief toil is to humble himself, that Christ may be exalted—this gives the matter altogether a new aspect; they would labor at building the tower of Babel, but they have no idea of laboring at pulling it down.

And thus does it come to pass, that the ministers of the Gospel are repulsed with a more than common vehemence; and that their message is thrown back, as though the delivering it had been an insult. We can but mourn over men, who, with every thing to recommend them to their fellows, honorable in their dealings, large in their charities, true in their friendships, are yet dishonest to themselves and false to their God—dishonest to themselves, for they put a cheat on their souls; false to their God, for they give him not what he asks, and all else is worse than nothing. Yes, we could lament, with a deeper than the ordinary lamentation which should be poured over every lost soul, when integrity and generosity,

and patriotism and disinterestedness, all beautiful and splendid things, have only helped to confirm men in rejection of the Gospel, and have strengthened that dislike to the peculiar doctrines of christianity, which is natural to the heart, but which must be expelled, else we perish. And when we are asked whether it can indeed be, that men, so amiable and admirable, who have a yearning heart for every tale of sorrow, and an open hand for every case of destitution, and an instinctive aversion to whatever is mean and degrading, are treading the downward path which leads to the chambers of everlasting death, we can only say that the very qualities which seem to you to mark a fitness for heaven, have prevented the passage through that strait gate of the vineyard, which is wide enough for every sinner, but too narrow for any sin; and that thus has been paralleled the whole case of the second son, who said to his father, "I go, sir," and went not.

And now we must have said enough to convince you that the delineation of our parable is not local or temporary, but may justly be extended to all ages of the church. We make this assertion, because though, as yet, we have only examined the case of one son, our remarks have had an indirect bearing on that of the other. We have shown you that the obstacles to the reception of the truths of the Gospel are often greatest where appearances seem to augur the readiest welcome. Where the promise is most freely given, how frequently is the performance withheld. And though the converse of this may not be necessarily true, namely, that, where we have refusal at first, we may expect ultimate compliance, yet, undoubtedly the case of the second son prepares us to feel no surprise at that of the first. If there be final refusal, where there is most of present consent, it can be no ways strange that there should be final consent, where there is most of present refusal.

This it is which is represented to us in the instance of the first son. His father came to him, and said, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." "He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went." There could be nothing more discourteous,

as well as nothing more peremptory, than the reply. He addresses his father with nothing of that respectful language which the second son used, and which might at least have softened the refusal. There is a harshness and bluntness in the answer, which, independently of the disobedience, proved him of a churlish and unmanageable temper. And we know, from the application which Christ himself made of the parable, that this first son is the representative of those more depraved and profligate characters, who make no profession of religion, but treat it with open contempt. There are many who will even go the length of boldly proclaiming their resolve to live "without God in the world," who glory in their shame; and who think it for their credit, as marking a free and unshackled spirit, that they have got rid of the restraints which the dread of future punishment imposes. Others again, who have not hardened themselves to this desperate degree, seem yet wholly inaccessible to warning and reproof; for they have, at least, persuaded themselves that they shall have a long lease of life, and that it will be soon enough at the eleventh hour to go and work in the vineyard. And in all such cases, whether we meet with the contemptuousness of unblushing immorality, or the coldness of determined indifference, we have the unqualified refusal which the first son gave his father—sometimes in a harsher, and at other times in a milder tone—but always the "I will not," which seems to preclude all hope of obedience.

These are the cases which seem most calculated to dispirit a minister; for it is even more disheartening to find that he makes no impression, than that, where it has been made, it has been quickly effaced. It is manifestly only the treacherous nature of the surface, which is in fault in the latter case; but in the former, he may fear that much of the blame is chargeable on his own want of energy in wielding his weapons. He may even, in moments of despondency, be wrought into a suspicion that these weapons are not as mighty as he had been instructed to believe. And therefore it is a marvellously cheering thing to be told

of the first son, that, "afterward he repented and went." We do not believe that the precious seed of the word is all lost, because there is no immediate harvest. We remember that great principle in God's dealings, which is announced by St. Paul, "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it first die." It is often, we are persuaded, in spiritual things, as it is always in natural—the grain is long buried, and, to all appearance, lost; but then suddenly come the signs of vegetation, and the soil is pierced by the fresh green blade.

We now address ourselves to those amongst you who have never entered the vineyard, who have never broken up the fallow ground, and sown to themselves in righteousness. We know not whether the number who fall under this description be great or small; nor whether it be mainly composed of those living in open sin, or of those who are only indifferent to the high claims of religion. But we say to these men, and these women, go, work to-day in the vineyard. We call upon them, and entreat them, that, whilst God yet strives with them by his Spirit, and the free offer of salvation is made them in his name, they would consider their ways, and turn unto the Lord, lest the evil day come upon them "as a thief." We anticipate what will be practically their answer. There may indeed be a solitary exception. Even now may there be the casting down of some stronghold of unbelief; and there may be one in this assembly, in whom our word is working energetically, convincing him of sin, and persuading him to make trial of Christ's power to save. But from the mass of those whom the first son represents, we can look for nothing but his answer; and if we could single out the individuals, and bid them to the vineyard, "I will not" would be but too faithful an account of their reply. And yet we do not necessarily conclude that we have labored in vain. Oh no, far enough from this. The word, which we have spoken, may in many cases have gained a lodgment, though long years may elapse ere it put forth its vigor. If we could follow, through the remainder of their lives, those with whom we now seem to plead wholly in vain, we can feel that we should find a



day breaking upon some of them, full of the memory of this very hour and this very sermon; and perceive that one cause or another had suddenly acted on the seed now sown, so that what we supposed dead was rapidly germinating. It is marvellous how often, in sickness or in sorrow, there will rush into the mind some long-forgotten text, some sentence, which was little heeded when first heard, but which settled itself down in the inner man, to wait a time when, like the characters which a mysterious hand traced before the Assyrian in his revels, it might flash dismay through every chamber of the spirit. The father's bidding, "go work to-day in my vineyard," will rise into remembrance with a sudden and overcoming energy; it may not have been heard for years, it may not have been thought of for years; but when the man is brought low, and health is failing him, and friends are forsaking him, he will seem to hear it, not less distinctly, and far more thrillingly, articulated, than when it fell disregarded from the lips of the preacher; and he will wonder at his own perverseness, and weep over his infatuation.

We are sketching to you no imaginary case, but one which all, who have opportunities of reading men's spiritual histories, will tell you is of frequent occurrence. The son who harshly says, "I will not," remembers the command and the refusal on some long after day, repents of his sinfulness, and hastens to the vineyard. The pathetic remonstrance of a parent with a dissolute child is not necessarily thrown away, because that child persists in his dissoluteness: it may come up, with all the touching tones of the well-remembered voice, when the parent has long lain in the grave, and work remorse and contrition in the prodigal. The bold address of the minister to some slave of sensuality is not necessarily ineffectual, because its object departs unmoved and unchanged, and breaks not away from the base thralldom in which he is held. That address may ring in his ears, as though unearthly voices syllabled its words, when the minister's tongue has long been mute. "He, being dead, yet speaketh," are words which experience marvellously verifies in regard of those whose office it is to rebuke vice and

animate to righteousness. They may be verified in the instance of some one who now hears me. I feel so encouraged by the account of the first son, that I could even dare to prophesy the history of one or more in this assembly. There may be some to whom I never before preached the Gospel, and to whom I may never preach it again. I speak in ignorance. I know not how far this may be true on the present occasion. But I can imagine, that, in the throng which surrounds me, there is one to whom I speak for the first time, and who will never see me again till we meet at the judgment-seat of Christ. He may be in the vigor of his youth, life opening attractively before him, and the world wearing all that freshness and fairness with which it beguiles the unwary. And he will have no ear for the summonses of religion. It is in the name of the God of the whole earth that I conjure him to mortify the flesh, and fasten his affections on things above. It is by his own majesty, his own dignity, as an immortal being, that I would stir him to the abandoning all low pursuits, and engaging in the sublime duties of righteousness. But he will not be persuaded. He has made his election: and, when he departs from the house of God, it will be to return to the scenes and companions of his thoughtlessness and dissipation. Yet I do not despair of this man. I do not conclude my labor thrown away. I am looking forward to an hour, which may be yet very distant, when experience will have taught him the worthlessness of what he now seeks, or a broken constitution have incapacitated him for his most cherished pleasures. The hour may not come whilst I am on the earth; I may have long before departed, and a stranger may be ministering in my place. But I shall be in that man's chamber, and I shall stand at his bed-side, and I shall repeat my now despised exhortation. There will be, as it were, a resurrection of the present scene and the present sermon. The words, which now hardly gain a hearing, but which, nevertheless, are burying themselves in the recesses of the mind, that they may wait an appointed season, will be spoken to the very soul, and penetrate to the quick, and produce that godly sorrow which

worketh repentance. And when you ask me upon what I am bold enough to ground such a prophecy, and from what data I venture to predict that my sermon shall not die, but, though long forgotten, start finally into power and persuasiveness—my reply is, that the case of the first son in the parable must have cases which correspond to it in all ages of the church, and that we read of this son, that, though he refused, when bidden, to work in the vineyard, yet “afterward he repented and went.”

There are two cautions suggested by this latter part of our subject, and with these we would conclude. The first is to parents, and guardians, and ministers; in short, to all whose business it may be to counsel and instruct. Let not the apparent want of success induce you to relax in your endeavors. You see that he who gives you a flat refusal, may ultimately reward you better than he who gives you a fair promise. Be not, therefore, disheartened; but rather act on the wise man’s advice, “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either

this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”

Our second caution is to those who may be ready, with the first son, to give a direct refusal, when bidden to go and work in the vineyard. Let not the thought, that you may afterwards repent, encourage you in your determination that you will not yet obey. The man who presumes on what is told us of the first son will never, in all probability, be represented by that son. I may have hopes of a man whose moral slumbers I cannot at all break; I almost despair of a man whom I can so far awaken that he makes a resolution to delay. The determining to put off is the worst of all symptoms: it shows that conscience has been roused, and then pacified; and wo unto the man who has drugs with which he can lull conscience to sleep. Again therefore we tell you that the exhortation of the text is limited as to time. “Go, work to-day in my vineyard.” To-morrow the pulse may be still, and there is “no work nor wisdom in the grave.” To-day ye are yet amongst the living, and may enroll yourselves with the laborers whose harvest shall be immortality.

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## SERMON.

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### THE DISPERSION AND RESTORATION OF THE JEWS.\*

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“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”—St. Matthew, 23 : 37, 38, 39.

These words occur in the Gospel of St. Luke, as well as in that of St. Matthew; but the times of delivery were

undoubtedly different. As given by St. Luke, they form part of Christ’s answer to certain Pharisees, who had come to him with intelligence that Herod sought to kill him. At this time, as it would seem, our Savior was mak-

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\* Preached on behalf of the London Society for the conversion of the Jews.



ing his last circuit of Galilee, before his arrival at Jerusalem at the fourth passover. But, as given by St. Matthew, the words appear to have been the last which Christ uttered in public, having been delivered just before his final departure from the temple, on the evening, most probably, of the Wednesday in Passion-week. You cannot have any doubt, if you compare the passages in the two Evangelists, that the words were uttered on very different occasions, so that, if what they contain of prophecy may have had a seeming accomplishment between the two deliveries, we should still have to search for an ampler fulfilment.

We make this remark, because, as you must all remember, when Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem from Bethany, a few days before his crucifixion, he was attended by a great multitude, who saluted him in the language of our text. "And they that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Had our text been found only in St. Luke, delivered on an occasion which preceded the triumphant reception of Christ, it might have been argued that what occurred at this reception fulfilled all its prophecy. Yet it would then have been easy to show that Christ must have referred to some more permanent reception of himself than that given by an inconstant multitude, who, within a few days, were as vehement in demanding his crucifixion as they had been in shouting Hosanna. We are however spared the necessity of advancing, or pressing, this argument, inasmuch as the words, as recorded by St. Matthew, were uttered subsequently to Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and could not, therefore, have been fulfilled by that event.

It should further be remarked, that the saying, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," is taken from a Psalm, the 118th, which the Jews themselves interpreted of the Christ. It is the Psalm in which are found the remarkable words, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner"—words which Jesus brought to bear on the chief priests and scribes when they deprecated the taking the vineyard

from the unfaithful husbandmen. We may therefore suppose, that, in quoting from this Psalm, the people designed to express their belief that Jesus was Messiah. We may further suppose, that, in declaring that Jerusalem should not see him again, till ready to apply to him the words he adduced, our Lord had respect to some future acknowledgment of his kingly pretensions.

We wish you to bear carefully with you these preliminary observations, as necessary to the settling the right interpretation of our text. Whatever may be your opinion of the import of the passage, as delivered by St. Luke, you can hardly fail to allow, that, as delivered by St. Matthew, it can have respect to no events recorded in the Gospels. The words were uttered by Christ, when concluding his public ministry: he left the temple so soon as he had pronounced them, and never again entered its precincts. We are, therefore, to take the text as Christ's parting address to his unbelieving countrymen; so that, in whatever degree they are prophetic, in that same degree must they belong to occurrences which were to follow his departure from earth.

Now it will be admitted by you all, that there is something singularly pathetic in the text, when thus regarded as the last words of Christ to the Jews. The Savior is taking his farewell of those whom he had striven, by every means, to lead to repentance. He had wrought the most wonderful miracles, and appealed to them in proof that he came forth from God. He had delivered the most persuasive discourses, setting forth, under variety of imagery, the ruin that would follow his being rejected, and offering the largest blessings to all who would come to him as a deliverer. But all had been in vain: and he knew that the time was at hand, when the measure of guilt would be filled up, and their Messiah be crucified by the Jews. Yet he would not depart without another and a bolder remonstrance. The chapter, of which our text is the conclusion, and which, as we have already stated, is the parting sermon of Christ, is without parallel in the Gospels for indignant rebuke and emphatic denunciation. The preacher seems, for a while, to have laid aside his meekness, and to have

assumed the character of a stern herald of wrath. And I know not that there is any where to be found such a specimen of lofty and withering eloquence. You cannot read it without emotions of awe, and almost of fear. Confronted by those who, he knew, thirsted for his blood, Christ intrepidly charged them with their crimes, and predicted their punishment. Had he been invested with all human authority, in place of standing as a defenceless and despised individual, he could not have uttered a sterner and more heart-searching invective. The marvel is, that his enemies should have allowed him to pour forth his tremendous oratory, that they did not fall upon him, without regard to the sacredness of the place, and take a fierce and summary revenge. "Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!" is the burden of his address: he reiterates the wo, till the temple walls must have rung with the ominous syllables. And then he bids the nation fill up the measure of their fathers. Their fathers had slain the prophets; and made great advances towards that ripeness of iniquity which was to mark the land out as ready for vengeance. But the national guilt was not yet complete. There was a crime by which the children were to outdo, and, at the same time, consummate the sinfulness of their fathers. And Christ calls them to the perpetration of this crime. They were bent on accomplishing his death—let them nail him to the cross, and then would their guiltiness reach its height, and the accumulated vengeance descend with a wild and overwhelming might. "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation."

And here the Savior might be said to have exhausted threatening; for what denunciation could be more tremendous, or more comprehensive? We may picture him to ourselves, launching this terrible sentence, a more than human fire in his eye, and a voice more deep-toned and thrilling than ever issued from mortal lips. I know of nothing that would be more sublime and

commanding in representation, if there could be transferred to the canvass the vivid delineations of thought, than the scene thus enacted in the temple. We figure the Redeemer undaunted by the menacing looks and half-suppressed murmurs of the fierce throng by which he was surrounded. He becomes more and more impassioned in his eloquence, rising from one bold rebuke to another, and throwing into his language a greater and greater measure of reproachfulness and defiance. And when he has compelled his hearers to shrink before the rush of his invective, he assumes the prophetic office, and, as though armed with all the thunders of divine wrath, announces authoritatively the approach of unparalleled desolation. This is the moment we would seize for delineation—though what pencil can think to portray the lofty bearing, the pre-eminent dignity, the awful glance, the terribleness, yet magnificence, of gesture, which must have characterized the Mediator, when, wrought up into all the ardency of superhuman zeal, he brake into the overwhelming malediction, "Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation!"

But if the scene of this moment defy the painter's art, what shall we say of that of the succeeding? No sooner had Christ reached that height of intrepid vehemence at which we have just beheld him, than he gave way to a burst of tenderness, and changed the language of invective for that of lamentation. At one moment he is dealing out the arrows of a stern and lacerating oratory, and the next, he is melted into tears, and can find no words but those of anguish and regret. Indeed it is a transition more exquisitely beautiful than can be found in the most admired specimens of human eloquence; and we feel that there must have passed a change over the countenance, and the whole bearing of the Savior, which imagination cannot catch, and which, if it could, the painter could not fix. There must have risen before him the imagery of a wrath and a wretchedness, such as had never yet overtaken any nation of the earth. And the people that should be thus signalled out were his countrymen, his kinsmen after the flesh, over whom his



heart yearned, and whom he had affectionately labored to convince of danger, and conduct to safety. He felt therefore, we may believe, a sudden and excruciating sorrow, so that the judgments which he foretold pressed on his own spirit, and caused him great agony. He was too pure a being, and he loved with too abiding and disinterested a love, to harbor any feeling allied with revenge; and, therefore, though it was for rejecting himself that those whom he addressed were about to be punished, he could not contemplate the punishment but with bitterness and anguish.

And hence the rapid and thrilling change from the preacher of wrath to the mourner over suffering. Hence the sudden laying aside of all his awful vehemence, and the breaking into pathetic and heart-touching expressions. Oh, you feel that the Redeemer must have been subdued, as it were, and mastered, by the view of the misery which he saw coming on Judea, and by the remembrance of all he had done to avert it from the land, ere he could have passed thus instantaneously from indignant rebuke to exquisite tenderness. And it cannot, we think, be without mingled emotions of awe and delight, that you mark the transition from the herald of vengeance to the sympathizer with the wretched. Just as you are shrinking from the fierce and withering denunciations, almost scathed by the fiery eloquence which glares and flashes with the anger of the Lord—just as you are expecting a new burst of threatening, a further and wilder malediction from the voice which seems to shake the magnificent temple—there is heard the sound as of one who is struggling with sorrow; and in a tone of rich plaintiveness, in accents musical in their sadness, and betraying the agony of a stricken spirit, there fall upon you these touching and penetrating words, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

But there is so much of important matter in this and the following verses, that it is time that we confine ourselves to considering the statements here made by Christ. We may arrange

these statements under three divisions. Under the first, we shall have to consider what had been done for Jerusalem; under the second, the consequences to the Jews of their rejecting the Christ; and, under the third, the future conversion of this unbelieving people.

Now you must be quite prepared for our regarding the Jews as a typical nation, so that, in God's dealings with them, we may read, as in a glass, his dealings with his church, whether collectively or individually. You must be aware that the history of the Israelites is full of symbolic occurrence; and that, without drawing any forced parallel, the narrative may be transferred in various of its parts, to our own day and generation, and be used as descriptive of what occurs among christians. You will not, therefore, be surprised, if we consider Christ's remonstrance with Jerusalem as every way applicable to the impenitent of later times, and as affirming nothing in regard of the Jews which may not be affirmed, with equal truth, of many amongst ourselves. There had been much done for Jerusalem; and it is in exquisitely moving terms that Christ states his own willingness to have sheltered that city. But herein, we are assured, Jerusalem was but the representative of individual transgressors, so that the very same words might be addressed to any amongst us who have obstinately withstood the motions of God's Spirit and the invitations of his Gospel. We cannot indeed be said to have killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto us. But if we have resisted the engines, whatever they may have been, through which God has carried on the moral attack; if we have turned a deaf ear to the prophet and the messenger, and thus done our part towards frustrating their mission; then we are virtually in the same position as Jerusalem, and may regard ourselves as addressed in the language of our text.

And when the verse is thus withdrawn from its merely national application, and we consider it as capable of being exemplified in the history of our own lives, it presents such an account of God's dealings with the impenitent, as yields to none in importance and interest. We observe first,

that however unable we may be to reconcile the certainty of a foreknown destruction with the possibility of avoiding it, we are bound to believe, on the testimony of our text, that no man's doom is so fixed that it may not be averted by repentance. It may appear to us, that, all along, the destruction of Jerusalem had been a settled thing in the purposes of the Almighty; and that God's plans were so arranged on the supposition of the final infidelity of the Jews, that they could not have allowed a final belief in the Christ. Yet Christ declares of Jerusalem, that he would often have gathered her children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and that only their own wilful infidelity had prevented his sheltering them from every outbreak of wrath. We cannot, therefore, doubt that it was quite within the power of the Jews to have repented; and that, had they hearkened to the voice of the Savior, they would have escaped all that punishment which appears so predetermined, that, to suppose it remitted, is to suppose God's plans thwarted. We finally admit that the Savior must have known that those whom he called would not obey. But there is all the difference between saying that they could not obey, and that they would not obey. In saying that they could not obey, we make them the subjects of some hidden decree, which placed an impassable barrier between themselves and repentance, and which therefore rendered nugatory, yea, reduced into mere mockery, the warnings and invitations with which they were plied. But in saying that they would not obey, we charge the whole blame on the perverseness of the human will, and suppose a clear space left, notwithstanding the foreknown infidelity, for those remonstrances and persuasions which are wholly out of place where there is no power of hearkening to the call.

And what we thus hold in regard of Jerusalem, must be equally held in regard of every individual amongst ourselves. We cannot doubt that there is not one in this assembly whose eternal condition is not as well known to the Almighty as though it were fixed by an absolute decree. But then it should be carefully observed, that this foreknowledge of God puts no restraint

upon man, obliges him not to one course rather than to another, but leaves him as free to choose between life and death, as though the choice must be made before it could be conjectured. The clouds of vengeance were just ready to burst upon Jerusalem; but the only reason why her children were not sheltered, was that "they would not." Thus with ourselves—God may be as certain of our going down finally into the pit, as though we had already been thrown to destruction; but the single reason, given at the last, why we have not escaped, will be our own rejection of a proffered deliverance. There is no mystery in this, nothing inscrutable. There is no room for pleading that a divine decree was against us, and that, therefore, salvation, if nominally offered, was virtually out of reach. It was not out of the reach of Jerusalem, though her grasping it would have apparently deranged the whole scheme of redemption. And it is not out of the reach of any one of us, however the final impenitence of this or that individual may be fully ascertained by the foreknowledge of God. It is nothing to say that it is impossible for me to do what God knows I shall not do. It is not God's foreknowledge, it is only my own wilfulness, which makes the impossibility. I am not hampered, I am not shackled by God's foreknowledge: I am every jot as free as though there were no foreknowledge. And thus, without searching into secret things which belong only to God, and yet maintaining in all their integrity the divine attributes, we can apply to every one who goes on in impenitence, the touching remonstrance of Christ in our text. If such a man reach that moment, which had been reached by Jerusalem, the moment when the day of grace terminates, and the overtures of mercy are brought to a close, the Savior may say to him, "How often would I have gathered thee under my wings, and thou wouldst not!"

How often! Who is there amongst us unto whom have not been vouchsafed repeated opportunities of knowing the things which belong unto peace? Who, that has not been frequently moved, by the expostulations of conscience and the suggestions of God's Spirit, to flee the wrath to come? Who, upon



whom the means of grace have not been accumulated, so that, time after time, he has been threatened, and warned, and reasoned with, and besought? How often! I would have gathered thee in thy prosperity, when thou wast spoken to in mercies, and bidden to remember the hand whence they came. I would have gathered thee in thine adversity, when sorrow had softened thine heart, and thou didst look on the right hand, and on the left, for a comforter. How often! By every sermon which thou hast heard, by every death in thy neighborhood, by every misgiving of soul, by every joy that cheered thee, and by every grief that saddened thee, I have spoken, but thou wouldest not hear, I have called, but thou wouldest not answer. We may be thoroughly assured that there is not one of us who shall be able to plead at the last, that he was not sufficiently invited. There is not one of us, who shall be able to charge his perdition on any thing but his own choice. "How often," "how often," will ring in the ear of every man who remains unconverted beneath the ministry of the Gospel; the remembrance of abused mercies, and slighted means, and neglected opportunities, being as the knell of his unalterable doom. And, oh, as the wicked behold the righteous sheltered beneath the Mediator's protection, from all the fury which gathers and hurries over a polluted creation, we can believe, that, of all racking thoughts, the most fearful will be, that they too might have been covered by the same mighty wing, and that, had they not chosen exposure to the iron sleet of God's wrath, they too might have rested in peace, whilst the strange work of destruction went forward. Therefore will their own consciences either pass or ratify their sentence. They will shrink down to their fire and their shame, not more compelled by a ministry of vengeance, than torn by a consciousness that they, like the children of Jerusalem, might have often taken shelter under the suretyship of a Redeemer, and that they, like the children of Jerusalem, are naked and defenceless, only because they would not be covered with his feathers.

But we go on to the second topic which is presented to us by the words

under review, the consequences to the Jews of their rejecting the Christ. These consequences are, the desolation of their national condition, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," and the judicial blindness which would settle upon them, so that, until a certain period had elapsed, they should not see, and acknowledge, the Savior. This latter consequence is stated in the concluding verse of the text, "ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,"—that is, I shall withdraw myself altogether from you, till a time arrive at which you shall be prepared to welcome me as Messiah. Thus we have a double prophecy of what should befall the Jews, a prophecy of their misery, and a prophecy of their infidelity. And along with this prophecy there is an evident intimation of what has been the chief characteristic of the Jews, their complete separation, through all their dispersions, from every other people. We derive this intimation from the terms in which their misery is foretold, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." It seems as though it had been said that they were still to have a house, but that house would be desolate; Judea would be theirs, but themselves exiles from its provinces. And if the house were to remain appropriated to the Jews, the Jews must remain distinguished from other people; so that what predicts their punishment, predicts also, though in more obscure terms, their being kept apart from the rest of humankind, that they may at length be reinstated in the possession of their fathers.

But we confine ourselves at present to the prediction of their state, as affected by their rejection of Christ. They were to be desolate, but distinct from other people; and an obstinate unbelief was to characterize them through the whole period of "the times of the Gentiles." And we need hardly tell you of the accuracy with which such prophecy has been all along fulfilled. The predictions which bear reference to the Jews, have this advantage over all other, that their accomplishment may be said to force itself on the notice of the least observant, and not to require, in order to its de-

monstration, the labor of a learned research. Of all surprising phenomena, there is perhaps none as wonderful as that of the Jews' preserving, through long centuries, their distinguishing features. It would have been comparatively nothing, had the Jews remained in Judea, that they should have continued marked off from every other people. But that they should have been dispersed into all nations, and yet have amalgamated with none; that they should be every where found, and yet be every where the same; that they should submit themselves to all forms of government, and adopt all varieties of customs, and yet be unable, after any lapse of time, to extirpate their national marks; we may pronounce this unparalleled in the history of mankind, and inexplicable but as the fulfilment of prophecy. If the Jews, though removed from their own land, had been confined to one other, we might have found causes of a protracted distinction, in national antipathies or legislative enactments. But when the dispersion has been so universal, that, whosoever man treads, the Jew has made his dwelling, and yet the distinction is so abiding that you may always recognize the Jew for yourself, there is no place left for the explanations which might be given, were the marvel limited to a district or age; and we have before us a miracle, which would not be exceeded, nay, not by the thousandth part equalled, were we privileged to behold the mightiest suspension of the known laws of nature.

Neither is it only in the preservation of their distinguishing characteristics that the Jews are wonderful, and give evidence that Christ prophesied through a more than human foresight. The continued infidelity of the Jews is every jot as surprising as their continued separation. We are quite at a loss, on any natural principles, to account for their infidelity. It is easy to explain the little way which the Gospel makes amongst the heathen, but not the far less which it makes amongst the Jews. I may well expect to be met by a most vigorous opposition on the part of the heathen; for I go to them with a religious system which demands the unqualified rejection of their own; we have scarcely an inch of ground in

common; and if I would prevail on them to receive as true what I bring, I must prevail on them to renounce as false what they believe. But the case seems widely different when my attack is on the Jew. We have a vast deal of common ground. We believe in the same God; we receive the same Scriptures; we look for the same Messiah. There is but one point of debate between us; and that is, whether Jesus of Nazareth were the Christ. And thus the field of argument is surprisingly narrowed; in place of having to fight our way painfully from one principle to another, and of settling all the points of natural religion, as preliminary to the introduction of the mysteries of revealed, we can go at once to the single truth at issue between us, and discuss, from writings which we equally receive as inspired, the claims of Jesus to the being Messiah. Surely it might have been expected, that the infidelity of the Jew would have been far more easily overcome than that of the heathen; and that, in settling ourselves to win converts to christianity, there would have been a better prospect of gaining credence for the New Testament where the Old was acknowledged, than of making way for the whole Bible, where there was nothing but idolatry.

You are to add to this, that, whatever the likelihood that the Jew would reject christianity on its first publication, it was a likelihood which diminished with every year that rolled away; inasmuch as every year which brought no other Messiah, swelled the demonstration that Jesus was the Christ. It is not to be explained, on any of the principles to which we ordinarily recur in accounting for infidelity, why the Jews persisted in rejecting Jesus, when the time had long passed which themselves fixed for Messiah's appearing. Their prophecies had clearly determined that Christ would come whilst the second temple was standing, and at the close of seventy weeks from the termination of the Babylonish captivity. But when the second temple had been long even with the ground, and the seventy weeks, on every possible computation, had long ago terminated, the Jews, we might have thought, would have been compelled to admit, either



that Messiah had come, or that their expectation was vain, and that no deliverer would appear. There seemed no alternative, if they rejected Jesus of Nazareth, but the rejecting their own Scriptures. So that we can have no hesitation in affirming, that the continued infidelity, like the continued separation, of the Jews is wholly inexplicable, unless referred to the appointment and judgment of God. We can no more account, on any common principles, for their persisting in expecting a Redeemer, when the predictions on which they rest manifestly pertain to a long-departed age, than for their retaining all their national peculiarities, when they have been for centuries "without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice." In both cases they accomplish, and that too most signally, the prophecies of Christ—their house being left unto them desolate, and a judicial blindness having settled on their understanding.

And never, therefore, should we meet a Jew, without feeling that we meet the strongest witness for the truth of our religion. I know not how those, who are proof against all other testimony, can withstand that furnished by the condition of the Jews. They may have their doubts as to the performance of the miracles recorded in the writings of evangelists; but here is a miracle, wrought before their eyes, and which ceases not to be miracle because long continued. We call it miracle, because altogether contrary to what we had reason to expect, and not to be explained on mere natural principles. That the Jews have not ceased to be Jews; that, though scattered over the world, domesticated in every land, at one time hunted by persecution and ground down by oppression, at another, allowed every privilege and placed on a footing with the natives of the soil, there has been a proved impossibility of wearing away their distinguishing characteristics, and confounding them with any other tribe—is not this marvellous? That, moreover, throughout their long exile from their own land, they have held fast the Scriptures which prove their hopes vain, and appealed to prophets, who, if any thing better than deceivers, accuse them of the worst crime, and convict them of

the worst madness—we affirm of this, that it is a prodigy without equal in all the registered wonders which have been known on our earth: and I want nothing more to assure me that Christ came from God, and that he had a superhuman power of inspecting distant times, than the evidence vouchsafed, when I turn from surveying the once chosen people, and hear the Redeemer declaring in his last discourse in the temple, that their house should be left unto them desolate, and that a moral darkness should long cloud their understanding.

But we have now, in the third and last place, to consider what our text affirms of the future conversion of this unbelieving people. We have already insisted on the fact, that, in delivering the words under review, Christ was concluding his public ministrations, and that they could not, therefore, have been accomplished in events which occurred whilst he was yet upon earth. Yet they manifestly contain a prediction, that, at some time or another, the Jews would be willing to hail him as Messiah. In saying, "ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Christ undoubtedly implied that the Jews should again see him, but not till prepared to give him their allegiance. We referred you to the psalm in which this exclamation occurs, that you might be certified as to its amounting to an acknowledgment of the Messiah. So that, on every account, we seem warranted in assuming, that, whilst announcing the misery which the Jews were fast bringing on themselves, and the protracted infidelity to which they would be consigned, Christ also announced that a time would come, when the veil would be taken from their hearts, and they would delightedly receive the very being they were then about to crucify.

Such is the great event for which we yet look, and with which stands associated all that is most glorious in the dominion of christianity. We know not with what eyes those men can read prophecy, who discover not in its announcements the final restoration and conversion of the Jews. It is useless to attempt to resolve into figurative language, or to explain by a purely spiri-

tual interpretation, predictions which seem to assert the reinstatement of the exiles in the land of their fathers, and their becoming the chief preachers of the religion which they have so long labored to bring into contempt. These predictions are inseparably bound up with others, which refer to their dispersion and unbelief; so that, if you spiritualize any one, you must spiritualize the whole. And since every word has had a literal accomplishment, so far as the dispersion and unbelief are concerned, how can we doubt that every word will have also a literal accomplishment, so far as the restoration and conversion are concerned? If the event had proved the predicted dispersion to be figurative, the event, in all probability, would prove also the predicted restoration to be figurative. But, so long as we find the two foretold in the same sentence, with no intimation that we are not to apply to both the same rule of interpretation, we seem bound to expect, either in both cases a literal fulfilment, or in both a spiritual; and since in the one instance the fulfilment has been undoubtedly literal, have we not every reason for concluding that it will be literal in the other?

We believe, then, of the nation of Israel, that it has not been cast off for ever, that not for ever shall Jerusalem sit desolate, mourning her banished ones, and trodden down by the Gentiles. We believe, according to the declaration of Isaiah, that there shall come a day when "the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." We believe, according to the magnificent imagery of the same evangelical prophet, that a voice will yet say to the prostrate nation and city, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee; for in my wrath I smote thee; but in my favor have I had mercy on thee." We know not by what mighty impulse, nor at what mysterious signal, the scattered tribes shall arise from the mountains, and valleys, and islands of the earth, and hasten towards the

land which God promised to Abraham and his seed. We cannot divine what instrumentality will be brought to bear on mankind, when God shall "say to the north, give up, and to the south, keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." But we are sure, that, whatever the means employed to gather home the wanderers, they shall flow into Judea from every district of the globe; they shall fly as "the doves to their windows;" and the waste and desolate places become "too narrow by reason of the inhabitants."

And when God's hand shall have been lifted up to the Gentiles, compelling them to bring his sons in their arms, and his daughters on their shoulders; when marching thousands shall have crossed the confines of Palestine, and pitched their tents in plains which the Jordan waters; then will there be a manifestation of the Christ, and then a conversion of the unbelieving. We have but few, and those obscure, notices of this august consummation. We may perhaps gather, from the predictions of Ezekiel and Daniel, that, when the Jews shall have resettled themselves in Judea, they will be attacked by an anti-christian confederacy; that certain potentates will combine, lead their armies to the holy land, and seek to plunder and exterminate the reinstated people. And the struggle will be vehement; for it is declared in the last chapter of the Prophecies of Zechariah, "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and half of the city shall go forth into captivity." But at this crisis, when the anti-christian powers seem on the point of triumphing over the Jews, the Lord, we are told, shall visibly interpose, and turn the tide of battle. "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives." It was from the mount of Olives that Jesus ascended, when he had gloriously completed our redemption. And whilst the apostles "looked, steadfastly towards heaven, as he went up," there stood by them two men in white apparel, which told them that "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." There was here a clear prophecy that



Christ should return personally to the earth, and that, too, in like manner as he departed. And it may be one point of similarity between the departure and the return, that, as he went up from the mount of Olives, so, as Zechariah predicts, it shall be on the mount of Olives he descends. Then shall he be seen and known by the Jewish people. Then shall the hearts of this people, which had been previously moved, it may be, to the seeking the God of their fathers, though not to the acknowledging the crucified Messiah, sink within them at the view of the being whom their ancestors pierced, and whom themselves had blasphemed. They shall recognize in him their long-expected Christ, and throwing away every remnant of infidelity, and full of remorse and godly contrition, shall fall down before him, and supplicate forgiveness, and tender their allegiance.

This we believe to be the time referred to by Christ in the prophecy of our text. Then will the nation be prepared to exclaim, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then will the period, which God, in his righteous vengeance, hath appointed for the desolation of their house, be brought to its close; "the times of the Gentiles" will be completed, and the jubilee year of this creation will commence. Until the Jews, with one heart and one voice, shall utter the welcome of our text, we are taught to expect no general diffusion of christianity, nothing which shall approach to that complete mantling of the globe with righteousness and peace, which prophets have described in their most fervid strains. But the uttering this welcome by the reinstated Israelites, shall be as the blast of the silver trumpets which ushered in the Jubilee of old. The sound shall be heard on every shore. The east and the west, the north and the south, shall echo back the peal, and all nations, and tribes, and tongues shall join in proclaiming blessed "the King of kings and Lord of lords." Jerusalem, "her walls salvation and her gates praise," shall be erected into the metropolis of the regenerated earth; and she shall send forth, in every direction, the preachers of the "one Mediator between God and man;" and rapidly shall all error, and

all false doctrine, and all superstition, and all opposition, give way before these mighty missionaries; till, at length, the sun, in his circuit round this globe, shall shine upon no habitations but those of disciples of Christ, and behold no spectacle but that of a rejoicing multitude, walking in the love of the Lord our Redeemer.

Such, we believe, is the prophetic delineation of what shall occur at the second advent of Christ. And if there were great cause why Jesus should weep over Jerusalem, as he thought on the infidelity of her children, and marked the long train of calamities which pressed rapidly onwards, there is abundant reason why we, upon whom are fallen the ends of the world, should look with hope to the hill of Zion, and expect, in gladness of spirit, the speedy dawning of bright days on the deserted and desecrated Judea. If we have at heart the advance of christianity, we shall be much in prayer for the conversion of the Jews. "Ye that make mention of the Lord," saith the prophet Isaiah, "keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." I have more than sympathy with the Jews as a people chastened for the sin of their ancestors: I have an indistinct feeling of reverence and awe, as knowing them reserved for the most glorious allotments. It is not their sordidness, their degradation, nor their impiety—and much less is it their suffering—which can make me forget either the vast debt we owe them, or the splendid station which they have yet to assume. That my Redeemer was a Jew, that his apostles were Jews, that Jews preserved for us the sacred oracles, that Jews first published the tidings of salvation, that the diminishing of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles—I were wanting in common gratitude, if, in spite of all this, I were conscious of no yearnings of heart towards the exiles and wanderers. But, asks St. Paul, "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" And if indeed the universal reign of Christ cannot be introduced, until the Jews are brought, like Paul their great type, to preach the faith which now

they despise, where can be our sincerity in putting up continually the prayer, "thy kingdom come," if we have no longing for the home-gathering of the scattered tribes, no earnestness in supplication that the veil may be taken from the heart of the Israelite?

In proportion as we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ," we shall grow in the desire that the Redeemer's sovereignty may be more widely and visibly extended. And as this desire increases, our thoughts will turn to Jerusalem, to the scenes which witnessed Christ's humiliation, and which have also to witness his triumphs. Dear to us will be every mountain and every valley; but not more dear because once hallowed by the footsteps of the Man of sorrows, than because yet to be irradiated by the magnificent presence of the King of kings. Dear will be Lebanon with its cedars, and Jordan with its waters; but not more dear, because associated with departed glories, than because the trees have to rejoice, and "the floods to clap their hands," before the Lord, as he cometh down in pomp to his kingdom. Dear will be the city, as we gaze upon it in its scathed and wasted estate; but not more dear, because Jesus sojourned there, and suffered there, and wept there bitter tears, than because Jerusalem hath yet to be "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God." We bid you, therefore, examine well, whether you assign the Jew his scriptural place in the economy of redemption, and whether you give him his due share in your intercessions with your Maker. You owe him much; yea, vastly more than you can ever compute. The branches were broken off; and we, being wild olive trees, were grafted in amongst them. But the natural branches shall be again grafted into their own olive tree. And when they are thus grafted, then—and who will not long, who will not pray for

such result?—the seed which was less, when sown, than all the seeds in the earth, shall grow suddenly into a plant of unrivalled stature and efflorescence; the whole globe shall be canopied by the far-spreading boughs, and the fowls of the air shall lodge under its shadow.

I have only to add, that, as you leave the church, you will be asked to prove that you do indeed care for the Jews, by subscribing liberally towards a Society which devotes all its energies to the attempting their conversion. I have indeed spoken in vain, if the attempt shall prove that you refuse this Society your aid, or give it only in scant measure. And it is not I who appeal to you. The memory of a great and good man\* appeals to you. The Society for the Conversion of the Jews was the favorite Society of that admirable and lamented person, who, for so many years, labored in the ministry in this town, and who can hardly be forgotten here for generations to come. In preaching for this Society, I redeem a promise which I made to him when my duties brought me last year to this place. I obey his wish, I comply with his request. And it cannot be that you will fail to embrace gladly an opportunity of showing your respect for so eminent a servant of God, one who spent and was spent, that he might guide you to heaven. You might erect to him a costly monument; you might grave his virtues on the brass, and cause the marble to assume a living shape, and bend mournfully over his ashes. But be ye well assured, that, if his glorified spirit be yet conscious of what passes on this earth, it would be no pleasure to him to see that you gathered into solemn processions to honor his obsequies, and reared, in token of your love, the stately cenotaph, compared with what he would derive from beholding your zeal, in gathering into the christian fold "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

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\* The Rev. Charles Simeon.



# SERMONS PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE;

February, 1837.

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The publication of the following Sermons was strongly requested by many of those who had heard them delivered. The Author was thus placed under the same circumstances as a year ago, when he had discharged the duties of Select Preacher before the University. He felt that it would not become him to act differently on the two occasions; and he can now only express his earnest hope that discourses, which were listened to with singular kindness and attention, may be perused with some measure of advantage.

CAMBRIDGE, March 4, 1837.

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## SERMON I.

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### THE UNNATURALNESS OF DISOBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL.

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“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth; before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”—Galatians, 3 : 1.

It is to be observed that the Galatians, here addressed, were not Jews; neither had they been dwellers in Jerusalem, when Christ died upon the cross. It was not therefore true of them, any more than of ourselves, that, with the bodily eye, they had beheld Jesus crucified. If the Savior had been evidently set forth before the Galatians, sacrificed for sin, it could only have been in the same manner as he is set before us, through the preaching of the word, and the administration of the Sacraments. There was no engine brought to bear on the Galatians, except that of the miracles which the first teachers wrought, which is not also brought to bear upon us; and the miracles were of no avail, except to the making good points on which we profess ourselves already convinced. If therefore the very Gospel which St. Paul preached be preached in our hearing, and the very Sacraments which he administered be administered in our

assemblies, it may be said of us, with as much propriety as of the Galatians, that “Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among us.”

The greater distance at which we stand from the introduction of christianity does not necessarily occasion any greater indistinctness in the exhibition of the Savior. It was not the proximity of the Galatians to the time of the crucifixion which caused Christ to appear as though crucified among them; for once let a truth become an object of faith, not of sight, and it must make way by the same process at different times—there may be diversity in the evidence by which it is sustained, there is none in the manner in which it is apprehended.

We may therefore bring down our text to present days, and regard it as applicable, in every part, to ourselves. There are two chief topics which will demand to be handled. You observe that the apostle speaks of it as so sin-

gular, that men should disobey the truth, that he can only ascribe it to sorcery or fascination. You observe also that he grounds this opinion on the fact, that christianity had been so propounded to these men, that Christ himself might be said to have been crucified among them. We shall invert the order of the text, believing that it may be thus most practically considered. In the first place, it will be our endeavor to show you, that there is nothing exaggerated in our declaring of yourselves, that "before your eyes Christ Jesus hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." In the second place, we shall make this fact a basis on which to ground a question to those who are yet neglectful of the soul, "Who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?"

Now we are bold to claim at once a high character for the ministrations of the Gospel, and shall not attempt to construct a labored proof of their power. We do not substantiate our claim by any reference to the wisdom or energy of the men by whom these ministrations may be conducted; for Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God alone can give the increase. It is altogether as a divinely instituted ordinance that we uphold the might of preaching, and contend that it may have such power of annihilating time, and reducing the past to present being, as to set Christ evidently before your eyes, crucified among you. We are assured, in regard of the public ministrations of the word, that they are the instituted method by which the events of one age are to be kept fresh through every other. And, on this account, we can have no hesitation in using language with regard to these our weekly assemblies, which would be wholly unwarranted, if we ascribed the worth of preaching, in any degree, to the preacher. When the services of God's house are considered as an instrumentality through which God's Spirit operates, we may safely attribute to those services extraordinary energy.

We say therefore of preaching, that it must be separated as far as possible from the preacher; for it is only when thus separated, that we can apply to it St. Paul's assertion in our text. I might now bring before you a summary of the

history of Christ. I might evoke from the past the miracles of Jesus, and bid you look on, as the sick are healed, and the dead raised. I might lead you from scene to scene of his last great struggle with the powers of darkness, and summon you to behold him in the garden, and at the judgment-seat, on the cross and in the grave. And then, as though we were actually standing, as stood the Israelites, when the fiery serpents were abroad, round the cross which sustained that to which we must look for deliverance, might I entreat you, by the hopes and fears which centre in eternity, to gaze on the Lamb of God as the alone propitiation for sin. This I might do; and this has been often done from this place. And shall we hesitate to affirm, that, whensoever this is done, Jesus Christ is "set forth, crucified among you?" It is not that we can pretend to throw surpassing vividness into our representations. It is not that we can claim such power of delineation as shall renovate the past, and cause it to re-appear as a present occurrence. It is not, that, by any figure of speech, or any hold on your imaginations, we can summon back what has long ago departed, and fix it in the midst of you visibly and palpably. It is only, that as intercession has been appointed to perpetuate the crucifixion of Christ—so that, as our Advocate with the Father, he has continually that sacrifice to present, which he offered once for all upon Calvary—so has preaching been appointed to preserve the memory of that death which achieved our redemption, and keep the mighty deed from growing old.

The virtue therefore which we ascribe to our public discourses, is derived exclusively from their constituting an ordained instrumentality; and our confidence that the virtue will not be found wanting, flows only from a conviction that an instrumentality, once ordained, will be duly honored, by God. We believe assuredly that there is at work, in this very place, and at this very moment, an agency independent of all human, but which is accustomed to make itself felt through finite and weak instruments. As the words flow from the lips of him who addresses you, flow apparently in the unaided strength of mere earthly speech, they may be



endowed by this agency with an energy which is wholly from above, and thus prevail to the setting christianity before you, with as clear evidence as was granted to those who saw Jesus in the flesh. So that, if there were nothing entrusted to us but the preaching of the word, if we had no sacraments to administer, we should feel, that, without presumption, we might declare of our hearers what St. Paul declared of the christians at Galatia. Yea, so deep is our persuasion of our living under the dispensation of the Spirit, and of preaching being the chief engine which this Spirit employs in transmitting a knowledge of redemption, that, after every endeavor, however feeble and inadequate to bring under men's view "the mystery of godliness," we feel that practically as much is done for them as though they had been spectators of Christ's expiatory sufferings; and therefore could we boldly wind up every such endeavor, by addressing our auditors as individuals, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among them."

But you are to add to this, that not only is there the preaching of the Gospel in our churches; there is also the administration of sacraments. We will confine ourselves to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as furnishing the more forcible illustration. It is said by St. Paul, in reference to this sacrament, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come"—an explicit assertion that there is in the Lord's supper, such a manifestation of the crucifixion of Jesus, as will serve to set forth that event until his second appearing. And we scarcely need tell you, that, inasmuch as the bread and the wine represent the body and blood of the Savior, the administration of this sacrament is so commemorative of Christ's having been offered as a sacrifice, that we seem to have before us the awful and mysterious transaction, as though again were the cross reared, and the words "It is finished" pronounced in our hearing. We have here the representation by significative action, just as, in the case of preaching, by authoritative announcement. For no man can partake of this sacrament, with his spiritual sensibilities in free exercise,

and not seem to himself to be traversing the garden and the mount, consecrated by a Mediator's agony, whilst they witness the fearful struggles through which was effected our reconciliation to God.

And if we attach weight to the opinion of the church in her best days, we must hold that there is actually a sacrifice in the Eucharist, though of course not such as the papists pretend. Christ is offered in this sacrament, but only commemoratively. Yet the commemoration is not a bare remembering, or putting ourselves in mind; it is strictly a commemoration made to God the Father. As Christ, by presenting his death and satisfaction to his Father, continually intercedes for us in heaven, so the church on earth, when celebrating the Eucharist, approaches the throne of grace by representing Christ unto his Father in the holy mysteries of his death and passion.\*

From the beginning it has been always the same awfully solemn rite, which might have attested and taught christianity, had every written record perished from the earth. All along it has been the Gospel preached by action, a phenomenon of which you could give no account, except by admitting the chief facts of the New Testament history, and which might, in a great degree, have preserved a knowledge of those facts, had they never been registered by Evangelists. It is like a pillar erected in the waste of centuries, indelibly inscribed with memorials of our faith; or rather, it is as the cross itself, presenting to all ages the immolation of that victim who "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And so long as this sacrament is administered in our churches, men shall never be able to plead that there are presented to them none but weak and inefficacious exhibitions of Christ. If the crucifixion be not vivid, as delineated from the pulpit, it must be vivid as delineated from the altar. And it is nothing that hundreds absent themselves from the great celebration, and thus never witness the representation of the crucifixion. They are invited to that celebration, they are perfectly aware of its nature, and their remaining away can

\* See Mede on Malachi, 1 : 11.

do nothing towards lessening its solemnities, and stripping it of energy as an exhibition of Christ's death. And whilst men are members of a church in whose ordinances the Lord's death is continually shown forth, we can be bold to address them, whether they neglect or whether they partake of those ordinances, in the very terms in which St. Paul addressed the Galatians of old. Yes, whatever our infirmities and deficiencies as preachers of the everlasting Gospel, we take high ground as intrusted with dispensing the sacrament of the Eucharist: and whilst we have to deliver the bread of which Christ said, "Take, eat, this is my body," and the cup of which he declared, "this is my blood of the New Testament," we may look an assembly confidently in the face, and affirm that there are proffered them such exhibitions of the sacrifice of the Mediator, that Jesus Christ is evidently set forth before their eyes, crucified among them.

But we have now, in the second place, to assume that the facts of the Gospel are thus brought vividly before you, and to infer from it that disobedience to the truth can only be ascribed to fascination or witchcraft. The question, "Who hath bewitched you?" indicates the persuasion of the apostle, that the Gospel of the crucifixion was eminently adapted to make way upon earth. And this is a point which perhaps scarcely receives its due share of attention. We know so well that there is practically a kind of antipathy between the doctrines of christianity and the human heart, that, whilst we admit the necessity of a supernatural influence to procure them reception, we never think of referring to sorcery to explain their rejection. It seems so natural to us to disobey the truth, however clearly and forcibly propounded, that, when disobedience is to be accounted for, there appears no need for the calling in witchcraft.

Yet there is, we believe, a mistake in this, and one calculated to bring discredit on the Gospel. If you represent it as a thing quite to be expected, that men would disobey the Gospel—just as though the Gospel were so constructed as to be necessarily repulsive—you invest it with a character at variance with the wisdom of its Author;

for you declare of the means, that they are not adapted to the end which is proposed. And we wish to maintain, that, situated as fallen men are, the Gospel of the crucifixion adapts itself so accurately to their wants, and addresses itself so powerfully to their feelings, that their rejection of it is a mystery, in the explaining of which we are forced to have recourse to the witch's fascinations. We reckon that the great truth of christianity, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" for its rescue, is so fitted for overcoming the obstinacy, and melting the hearts of humankind, that it must be matter of amazement to higher orders of intelligence, that it should be heard with indifference, or rejected with scorn. Angels, pondering a fact which appears to them more surprising than the humiliation and death of the everlasting Word—the fact that redeemed creatures reject their Redeemer—may propose amongst themselves the very question of our text, "who hath bewitched them that they should not obey the truth?"

We shall not include in our investigations into the fairness of this question the case of the open infidel, who professedly disbelieves the whole of christianity. We omit this case, not because we think that it is not to be accounted for as the result of some species of fascination, but only because it is not one of those directly intended by St. Paul. As to the fascination or witchcraft, it scarce admits debate. For we can never allow, that, where reason has fair play, and the intellect is permitted to sit in calm judgment on the proofs to which christianity appeals, there will be aught else but a verdict in favor of the divine origin of our religion. So mighty are the evidences on which the faith rests, that, where there is candor in the inquirer, belief must be the issue of the inquiry. And where-soever there is a different result, we can be certain that there has been some fatal bias on the reasoning faculties; and that, whether it have been the sorcery of his own passions, or of "the prince of the power of the air," the man has been as verily spell-bound throughout his investigations, as though with Saul he had gone down to the cave of the enchantress, and yielded



himself to her unhallowed dominion.

But we pass by this case, and come at once to the considering, whether the Gospel of Christ be not admirably calculated for making way to the conscience and the heart, so that the marvel is not that it should here and there win a convert, but rather that it does not meet with universal success.

Let it, first, be observed with how surpassing an energy this Gospel appeals to the fears of mankind. We say, to the fears—for it were indeed to take a contracted view of christianity, to survey it as proffering mercy, and to overlook its demonstrations of wrath. If Jesus Christ have been "evidently set forth, crucified among you," there has been exhibited to you so stern a manifestation of God's hatred of sin, that, if you can still live in violation of his laws, some fascinating power must have made you reckless of consequences. There is this marvellous combination in the Gospel scheme, that we cannot preach of pardon without preaching of judgment. Every homily as to how sinners may be forgiven, is equally a homily as to the fearfulness of their doom, if they continue impenitent. We speak to men of Christ as bearing their "sins in his own body on the tree," and the speech seems to breathe nothing but unmeasured loving-kindness. Yet who, on hearing it, can repress the thoughts, what must sin be, if no finite being could make atonement; what must its curse be, if Deity alone could exhaust it? And yet, with the great mass of men, this appeal to their fears is wholly ineffectual. Is it that the appeal is not sufficiently energetic? is it that it is not framed into such shape as to be adapted to beings with the passions and feelings of men? Is it that there is nothing in our nature, which responds to a warning and summons thus constructed and conveyed? We cannot admit the explanation. The crucifixion is a proclamation, than which there cannot be imagined a clearer and more thrilling, that an eternity of inconceivable wretchedness will be awarded to all who continue in sin. And yet men do continue in sin. The proclamation is practically as powerless as though it were the threat of an infant or an idiot. And we are bold to say of this, that it is unnatural. Men

have the flesh which can quiver, and the hearts which can quake; and we call it unnatural, that there should be no trembling, and no misgiving, when the wrath of the Almighty is being opened before them, and directed against them.

And if unnatural, what account can we give of their disobeying the truth? Oh, there have been brought to bear on them the arts of fascination and sorcery. I know not, in each particular case, what hath woven the spell, and breathed the incantation. But there must have been some species of moral witchcraft, by which they have been steeled against impressions which would otherwise have been necessarily produced. Has the magician been with them, who presides over the gold and silver, and persuaded them that wealth is so precious that it should be amassed at all risks? Has the enchantress who mingles the wine-cup, and wreathes the dance, been with them, beguiling them with the music of her blandishments, and assuring them that the pleasures of the world are worth every penalty they incur? Has the wizard, who, by the circlings of his wand, can cause the glories of empire to pass before men's view, as they passed, in mysterious but magnificent phantoms, before that of Christ in his hour of temptation, been with them, cajoling them with dreams of honor and distinction, till he have made them reckless of everlasting infamy? We say again, we know not what the enchantment may have been. We know not the draught by whose fumes men have been stupified, nor the voice by whose tones they have been infatuated. But we know so thoroughly that the Gospel, published in their hearing, is exactly adapted for the acting on their fears, for the filling them with dread, and moving them to energy, that, when we behold them indifferent to the high things of futurity, and yet remember that "Christ Jesus hath been evidently set forth, crucified among them," we can but resolve the phenomenon into some species or another of magical delusion; we can but ply them with the question, "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?"

But it is saying little, to say that the Gospel addresses itself to the fears of

mankind; it is equally adapted for acting on feelings of a gentler and more generous description. The effect of the fall was not to banish from man's breast "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report;" but rather—and this is far more melancholy, as proving alienation from God—that, whilst there can yet be the play of fine and noble emotions between man and man, there is nothing of the kind from man towards his Maker.

Those sympathies, which are readily called into exercise by the kindness and disinterestedness of a fellow-creature, seem incapable of responding to the love and compassion of our benevolent Creator. That statue, so famed in antiquity, which breathed melody only when gilded by the sunbeams, was just the opposite to man in his exile and alienation. No lesser rays, whether from the moon or stars, could wake the music that was sepulchred in a stone. The sun must come forth, "as a giant to run his race," and then the statue responded to his shinings, and hymned his praises. But not so with man. The lesser rays can wake some melody. The claims of country, or of kindred, can excite him to correspondent duties. But the sun shineth upon him in vain. The claims of God call forth no devotedness: and the stone which can discourse musically in answer to the glimmerings of philosophy, and the glow of friendship, is silent as the grave to the revelation of God and his Christ.

We declare of the Gospel, that it addresses itself directly to those feelings, which, for the most part, are instantly wakened by kindness and beneficence. Take away the divinity from this Gospel, reduce it into a record of what one man hath done for others, and it relates a generous interposition, whose objects, if they evinced no gratitude, would be denounced as disgracing humanity. If it be true that we naturally entertain sentiments of the warmest affection towards those who have done, or suffered, some great thing on our behalf, it would seem quite to be expected that such sentiments would be called into most vigorous exercise by the Mediator's work. If in a day when pestilence was abroad on the earth, and men dreaded its en-

trance into their household, we could carry them to a bed on which lay one racked by the terrible malady; and tell them that this individual had voluntarily taken the fearful infection, and was going down in agony to the grave, because complying, of his own choice, with a mysterious decree which assured him, that, if he would thus suffer, the disease should have no power over their families—is it credible that they would look on the dying man with indifference; or that, as they hearkened to his last requests, they would feel other than a resolve to undertake, as the most sacred of duties, the fulfilling the injunctions of one who, by so costly a sacrifice, warded off the evil with which they were threatened? And yet, what would this be, compared with our leading them to the scene of crucifixion, and showing them the Redeemer dying in their stead? You cannot say, that, if the sufferer on his death-bed would be a spectacle to excite emotions of gratitude, and resolutions of obedience, the spectacle of Christ on the cross might be expected to be surveyed with carelessness and coldness. Yet such is undeniably the fact. The result which would naturally be produced is not produced. Men would naturally feel gratitude, but they do not feel gratitude. They would naturally be softened into love and submission, and they manifest only insensibility and hard-heartedness.

And what are we to say to this? Here are beings who are capable of certain feelings, and who show nothing of those feelings when there is most to excite them; beings who can display love to every friend but their best, and gratitude to every benefactor but their greatest. Oh, we say—and it is the unnaturalness of the exhibition which forces us to say—that enchantment has been at work, stealing away the senses, and deadening the feelings. In all other cases the heart has free play; but in this it is trammelled, as by some magical cords, and cannot beat generously. Satan, the great deceiver, who seduced the first of humankind, has been busy with one sort or another of illusion, and has so bound men with his spells that they are morally entranced. We know not, as we said in the former case, what may



have been the stupifying charm, or the coercive incantation. We have not gone down with them to the haunts of the sorcerer, that we might know by what rites they have thus been humanized. But they would never be indifferent where there is most to excite, and insensible where there is all that can tell upon their feelings, if they had not surrendered the soul to some power of darkness, some beguiling and o'ermastering passion, some agency which, like that pretended to by the woman of Endor, professes to give life to the dead. And therefore remembering, that, as grafted into the Christian Church, they are men "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among them," we cannot see them manifesting no love to the Savior, and yielding him no allegiance, without feeling that this their vehement ingratitude is wholly unnatural, and without therefore pressing home upon them the question, "who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?"

We may certainly add, that, as addressing itself to men's hope, the Gospel is so calculated for making and retaining disciples, that nothing but the workings of sorcery will explain its rejection. It must be remembered that Christ, as Mediator, not only gained our pardon, but procured for us everlasting happiness. And if we must judge the immenseness of the escaped punishment, we must judge also that of the proffered glory, by the fact that our substitute was none other than a person of the Trinity. If Christ Jesus is set before men, crucified among them, they are manifestly taught, that, as the price paid is not to be computed, neither is the happiness of which it was the purchase. And they are beings keenly alive to their own interests, readily excited by any prospect of good, and who exhibit the greatest alacrity and vigor in pursuing such plans as promise them advantage. It is moreover their natural constitution, to forego a present for a future and far greater good, and to submit cheerfully to privations, in hopes of receiving what shall be more than equivalent. We call this their natural constitution; and we therefore, further, call it unnatural, and demonstrative of strange

and sinister influence, that they should choose the trifling in preference to the unmeasured, and give up the everlasting for the sake of the transient. Yet this men do when they disobey the Gospel. The Gospel addresses itself directly to their desire after happiness. It makes its appeal to that principle in their nature, which prompts them to provide for the future at the expense of the present. In every other case they hearken to such address, and respond to such appeal. But in this case, which differs from every other only in the incalculable superiority of the proffered good, they turn a deaf ear, and wear all the appearance of a natural incapacity of being stirred by such an engine as the Gospel brings to bear.

What account shall we give of this? A principle of their nature is in full vigor, except in the instance in which there is most to excite it, and then it seems utterly extinguished. They can pursue a future good, unless it be infinite, and be moved by any prospect of happiness, except of everlasting. There must have been sorcery here; and we have no difficulty in determining how the magician has worked. The devil has practised that jugglery which causes the objects of faith to shrink into insignificance, and those of sense to dilate into magnitude. There has been the weaving of that spell which circumscribes the view, so that, though a man can look forward, he never looks beyond the grave. There has been the drinking of that cup of voluptuousness, of which whosoever partakes is maddened into longing for yet deeper draughts. It is sorcery, it is witchcraft. Men would not hesitate, if an earthly good were to be secured on the conditions of the Gospel; and they refuse, when the good is heavenly, only because they had suffered themselves to be beguiled, and cheated, and entranced. There is a charm upon them, and their own passions have sealed it, binding them to love the world, and the things that are in the world. There is an enchanted circle, which their indulged lusts have traced, and within which they walk, so that they cannot expatiate over the vast spreadings of their existence. There is a syren voice, and their own wishes syllable its whispers, telling them there is no cause for haste,

but that hereafter it will be soon enough to attend to eternity. And thus there is no defect in the Gospel. It is adapted, with the nicest precision, to creatures so constituted as ourselves. But we live in the midst of gorgeous deceits, and brilliant meteors. The wizard's skill, and the necromancer's art, are busied with hiding from us what we most need to know; and our eyes are dazzled by the splendid apparitions with which the god of this world peoples his domain; and our ears are fascinated by the melodies in which pleasure breathes her incantations; and thus it comes to pass, that we are verily "bewitched" into disobeying the truth.

Would to God that we might all strive to break away from the seductions and flatteries of earth, and give ourselves in good earnest to the seeking happiness in heaven. And what is it that we ask of men, when we entreat them to escape from the magician, and live for eternity? Is it that they should be less intellectual, less philosophical? On the contrary, religion is the nurse of intellect, and philosophy is most noble when doing homage to revelation. It is not intellectual to live only for this world, it is not philosophical to remain ignorant of God. Is it that they should surrender their pleasures, and walk a round of unvaried mortification? We ask them to surrender nothing

which a rational being can approve, or an immortal vindicate. We leave them every pleasure which can be enjoyed without a blush, and remembered without remorse. We ask only that they would flee those vices whose end is death, cultivate those virtues which are as much the happiness as the ornament of man, and propose to themselves an object commensurate with their capacities. This, let them be assured, is practical christianity—to shun what, even as men, they should avoid, and pursue what, even as men, they should desire.

Shall we not then beseech the Almighty, that we may have strength to break the spell, and dissolve the illusion? The Philistines are upon us, as upon Samson, and we are yet, it may be, in the lap of the enchantress. But all strength is not gone. The Spirit of the living God may yet be entreated; and the razor of divine judgment hath not swept off the seven locks wherein our might lies. And therefore, however bewitched, each amongst us may yet struggle with the sorcerer who has bound him; and we can assure him that there is such efficacy in hearty prayer to the Lord, that, if he cry for deliverance, the green withes shall be "as tow when it toucheth the fire," and the new cords be broken like a thread from his arms.

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## SERMON II.

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### SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

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"But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"—Job, 35 : 10.

In regard of the concerns and occurrences of life, some men are always disposed to look at the bright side, and others at the dark. The tempers and feelings of some are so cheerful and

elastic, that it is hardly within the power of ordinary circumstances to depress and overbear them; whilst others, on the contrary, are of so gloomy a temperament, that the least



of what is adverse serves to confound them. But if we can divide men into these classes, when reference is had simply to their private affairs, we doubt whether the same division will hold, we are sure it will not in the same proportion, when the reference is generally to God's dealings with our race. In regard of these dealings, there is an almost universal disposition to the looking on the dark side, and not on the bright; as though there were cause for nothing but wonder, that a God of infinite love should permit so much misery in any section of his intelligent creation. You find but few who are ready to observe what provision has been made for human happiness, and what capacities there are yet in the world, notwithstanding its vast disorganization, of ministering to the satisfaction of such as prefer righteousness to wickedness.

Now we cannot deny, that if we merely regard the earth as it is, the exhibition is one whose darkness it is scarcely possible to overcharge. But when you seek to gather from the condition of the world the character of its Governor, you are bound to consider, not what the world is, but what it would be, if all, which that Governor hath done on its behalf, were allowed to produce its legitimate effect. And we are sure, that, when you set yourselves to compute the amount of what may be called unavoidable misery—that misery which must equally remain, if christianity possessed unlimited sway—you would find no cause for wonder, that God has left the earth burdened with so great a weight of sorrow, but only of praise, that he has provided so amply for the happiness of the fallen.

The greatest portion of the misery which is so pathetically bewailed, exists in spite, as it were, of God's benevolent arrangements, and would be avoided, if men were not bent on choosing the evil, and rejecting the good. And even the unavoidable misery is so mitigated by the provisions of christianity, that, if there were nothing else to be borne, the pressure would not be heavier than just sufficed for the ends of moral discipline. There must be sorrow on the earth, so long as there is death; but, if this were all, the cer-

tain hope of resurrection and immortality would dry every tear, or cause, at least, triumph so to blend with lamentation, that the mourner would be almost lost in the believer. Thus it is true, both of those causes of unhappiness which would remain, if christianity were universally prevalent, and of those for whose removal this religion was intended and adapted, that they offer no argument against the compassions of God. The attentive observer may easily satisfy himself, that, though for wise ends a certain portion of suffering has been made unavoidable, the divine dealings with man are, in the largest sense, those of tenderness and love, so that, if the great majority of our race were not determined to be wretched, enough has been done to insure their being happy. And when we come to give the reasons why so vast an accumulation of wretchedness is to be found in every district of the globe, we cannot assign the will and appointment of God: we charge the whole on man's forgetfulness of God, on his contempt or neglect of remedies and assuagements divinely provided; yea, we offer in explanation the words of our text, "none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"

We shall not stay to trace the connection between these words and the preceding, but rather separate at once the text from the context. We may then consider it as giving a beautiful character of God, which should attract men towards him, and which is sufficient pledge, that, if it did, they would be happy even in the midst of adversity. Or we may regard the words, when thus taken by themselves, as expressive of the inexcusableness of men in neglecting God, when he has revealed himself under a character the most adapted to the fixing their confidence. It is evident that Elihu represents it as a most strange and criminal thing, that, though our Maker giveth songs in the night, he is not inquired after by those on whom calamity presses. We may, therefore, divide what we have to say on our text under two general heads; considering, in the first place, what an aggravation it is of the guilt of men's forgetting their Creator, that he is a God "who giveth songs in the night;"

and showing you, in the second place, with how great truth and fitness this touching description may be applied to our Maker.

Now we must all be conscious, that, if pain and suffering were removed from the world, a great portion of the Bible would become quite inapplicable; for on almost its every page there are sayings which would seem out of place, if addressed to beings inaccessible to grief. And it is one beautiful instance of the adaptation of revelation to our circumstances, that the main thing which it labors to set forth is the love of our Maker. There are many untouched points on which curiosity craves information, and on which apostles and prophets might have been commissioned to pour a tide of illustration. But there is no point on which it was so important to us to be certified, as on this of God's love towards us, notwithstanding our alienation. We emphatically needed a revelation to assure us of this; for natural theology, whatever its success in delineating the attributes of God, could never have proved that sin had not excluded us from all share in his favor.

And accordingly it is at this the Bible labors; and thereby it becomes most truly the Bible of the fallen. A revelation of God to a rank of beings untainted by sin, would probably not be much occupied with affirming and exhibiting the divine love. There must be guilt, and therefore some measure of consciousness of exposure to wrath, ere there can be doubt as to whether the work of God's hands be still the object of his favor. The Bible therefore, if we may thus speak, of an order of angels, might contain nothing but gorgeous descriptions of divine supremacy and magnificence, opening the mightiest mysteries, but having no reference to the tenderness of a Father, which was always experienced, and none to the forgiveness of sinners, which was never required. But such a Bible would be as much out of place on this fallen creation, as ours in a sphere where all was purity and light. The revelation, which alone can profit us, must be a revelation of mercy, a revelation which brings God before us as not made irreconcilable by our many offences; a revelation, in short, which

discloses such arrangements for our restoration to favor, that there could be a night on which cherubim and seraphim lined our firmament, chanting the chorus, "peace on earth, good-will towards man," and thus proving of our Maker, that he is a God "who giveth songs in the night."

Now you all know that this is the character of the revelation with which we have been favored. Independently on the great fact with which the Bible is occupied, the fact of our redemption through the suretyship of a Mediator, the inspired writers are continually affirming, or insisting upon proofs, that the Almighty loves the human race with a love that passeth knowledge; and they give us, in his name, the most animating promises, promises whose full lustre cannot be discerned in the sunshine, but only when the sky is overcast with clouds. We must, for example, be ourselves brought to the very dust, ere we can rightly estimate this exquisite description of a being, who made the stars, and holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand, "God, that comforteth those that are cast down." We must know for ourselves the agony, the humiliation, of unforeseen grief, ere we can taste the sweetness of the promise, that God, he who hath "spread out the heavens like a curtain," and ordereth the motions of all the systems of a crowded immensity, "shall wipe away tears from off all faces."

But if God have thus revealed himself in the manner most adapted to the circumstances of the suffering, does not the character of the revelation vastly aggravate the sinfulness of those by whom God is not sought? Let all ponder the simple truth, that the having in their hands a Bible, which wondrously exhibits the tenderness of Deity, will leave us without excuse, if not found at last at peace with our Maker. For we are not naturally inaccessible to kindness. We are so constituted that a word of sympathy, when we are in trouble, goes at once to the heart, and even the look of compassion acts as a cordial, and excites grateful feelings. We have only to be brought into circumstances of pain and perplexity, and immediately we show ourselves acutely sensitive to the voice of consolation; and any of our fellow-crea-



tures has only to approach us in the character of a comforter, and we feel ourselves drawn out towards the benevolent being, and give him at once our thankfulness and friendship. But it is not thus with reference to God. God comes to us in the hour of anxiety, bidding us cast all our care upon him; but we look round for another resting-place. He comes to us in the season of affliction, offering us the oil and wine of heavenly consolation; but we hew out for ourselves "broken cisterns." He approaches in the moment of danger, proffering us refuge and succor; but we trust in our own strength, or seek help from those who are weak as ourselves. But let us be well assured that this single circumstance, that God hath revealed himself as a comforter, to those whose condition makes them need comfort, will prove us inexcusable, if we die without giving him the heart's best affections. He acts upon us in the manner in which, both from our necessities and our susceptibilities, there is the greatest likelihood of our being moved to the making him the prime object of our love. And if, notwithstanding, we prefer the creature to the Creator, what shall we have to urge, when he, who now deals with us in mercy, begins to deal with us in vengeance? Yes, it is not the manifestation of majesty, nor of power, nor of awfulness, which will leave us inexcusable; it is the manifestation of compassion, of good will, of tenderness. A fallen and unhappy creature, harassed by a thousand griefs, and exposed to a thousand perils, might have shrunk from exhibitions of Deity on his throne of clouds, and in his robes of light. He might have pleaded that there was every thing to confound, and nothing to encourage him. But what can he say, when the exhibitions are of God, as making all the bed of the sick man in his sickness, and cheering the widow in her desolateness, and supplying the beggar in his poverty, and guarding the outcast in his exile? Are not these exhibitions touching enough, thrilling enough, encouraging enough? Oh, I might perhaps have felt that it was not to prove the human race necessarily inexcusable in their forgetfulness of God, to say, none saith, where is God my Maker who is "from everlasting,

and to everlasting," who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers," who "telletth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names"—but I feel that it is to express such a wilful hard-heartedness as must demand and justify the severest condemnation, to say, "none saith, where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"

But we now proceed to the showing you, as we proposed in the second place, with how great truth and fitness this touching description may be applied to our Maker.

We have already referred to the precise adaptation of the Bible to our circumstances, and we would now examine this adaptation with a little more attention. We may assert that there cannot be imagined, much less found, the darkness, in passing through which there is no promise of Scripture by which you may be cheered. We care not what it is which hath woven the darkness; we are sure that God has made provision for his people's exulting, rather than lamenting, as the gloom gathers round them, and settles over them. Whatever be the nature of the afflictions with which any man has been visited, can he deny, if indeed he be one who has received Christ into the soul, that he has found "a word in season" in Scripture; will he not, at the least, confess, that, if he have passed through the period of calamity without experiencing such consolations as filled him with gratitude, it has been through his own fault and faithlessness, seeing that even the "vale of Baca" can be used by the righteous "as a well."

Let us take the case of most frequent occurrence, but of which frequency diminishes nothing of the bitterness. We mean the case of the loss of friends, the case in which death makes way into a family, and carries off one of the most beloved of its members. It is night—deep night, in a household, whensoever this occurs. When the loss is of another kind, it may admit of repair. Property may be injured, some cherished plan may be frustrated—but industry may be again successful, and hope may fix its eye on other objects. But when those whom we love best die, there is no comfort of this sort with which we can be comforted. For

a time, at least, the loss seems irreparable; so that, though the wounded sensibilities may afterwards be healed, and even turn to the living as they turned to the dead, yet, whilst the calamity is fresh, we repulse, as injurious, the thought that the void in our affections can ever be filled, and are persuaded that the blank in the domestic group can be occupied by nothing but the hallowed memory of the buried. It is therefore night in the household, darkness, a darkness that may be felt. And philosophy comes in, with its well-meant but idle endeavors to console those who sit in this darkness. It can speak of the unavoidable nature of death, of the duty of bearing with manly fortitude what cannot be escaped, of the injuriousness of excessive grief; and it may even hazard a conjecture of reunion in some world beyond the grave. And pleasure approaches with its allurements and fascinations, offering to cheat the mind into forgetfulness, and wile the heart from its sadness. But neither philosophy nor pleasure can avail any thing in the chamber of death; the taper of the one is too faint for so oppressive a gloom, and the torch of the other burns sickly in so unwonted an atmosphere. Is then the darkness such that those whom it envelopes are incapable of being comforted? Oh, not so. There may be those amongst yourselves who can testify, that, even in a night so dreary and desolate, there is a source whence consolation may be drawn. The promises of Scripture are never more strikingly fulfilled than when death has made an inroad, and taken away, at a stroke, some object of deep love. Indeed, it is God's own word to the believer, "I will be with him in trouble"—as though that presence, which can never be withdrawn, then became more real and intense.

What are we to say of cases which continually present themselves to the parochial minister? He enters a house, whose darkened windows proclaim that one of its inmates is stretched out a corpse. He finds that it is the fairest and dearest whom death has made his prey, and that the blow has fallen where sure to be most deeply felt. And he is prepared for the burst of bitter sorrow. He knows that the heart, when most purified by grace, is made of feel-

ing stuff; for grace, which removes the heart of stone, and substitutes that of flesh, will refine, rather than extinguish, human sensibilities. But what words does he hear from lips, whence nothing but lamentation might have been expected to issue? "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." The mother will rise up from the side of her pale still child; and though on the cheek of that child (alas, never again to be warm with affection) there are tears which show how a parent's grief has overflowed, she will break into the exclamation of the Psalmist, "I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." And when, a few days after, the slow windings of the funeral procession are seen, and the minister advances to meet the train, and pours forth the rich and inspiring words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"—is it only the low murmur of suppressed anguish by which he is answered? can he not feel that there are those in the group whose hearts bound at the magnificent announcement? and, as he looks at the mourners, does he not gather, from the uplifted eye and the moving lip, that there is one at least who is triumphing in the fulfilment of the prediction, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction?"

And what are we to say to these things? what but that, in the deepest moral darkness, there can be music, music which sounds softer and sweeter than by day; and that, when the instruments of human melody are broken, there is a hand which can sweep the heartstrings and wake the notes of praise? Yes, philosophy can communicate no comfort to the afflicted: it may enter where all is night; but it leaves what it found, even weeping and wailing. And pleasure may take the lyre, whose strains have often seduced and enchanted; but the worn and wearied spirit has no ear, in the gloom, for what sounded magically, when a thousand lights were blazing. But religion, faith in the promises of that God who is the Husband of the widow and the Father of the fatherless, this can cause the sorrowing to be glad in the midst



of their sorrow; for it is a description which every believer will confess borne out by experience, that God our Maker "giveth songs in the night."

But again—how beautifully accurate is this description, if referred generally to God's spiritual dealings with our race. It may well be said, that, so soon as man had fallen, it was night on this creation. The creature had shut itself out from the favor of the Creator; and what was this but to shroud the globe with the worst of all darkness? It was a darkness which no efforts of the human mind have been able to disperse. There is a point up to which natural theology has advanced, but which it has never passed. It has discovered a want, but not a supply; it has detected a disease, but not its remedy. We do not perhaps need the written word, in order to our ascertaining that we are exposed to God's wrath. The remonstrances and forebodings of conscience are, in themselves, sufficient to excite in us a belief and dread of judgment to come, and perhaps to extort from us the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" But the answer to this inquiry can be furnished only by a higher and deeper than natural theology. We make some way by groping in the darkness, but cannot emerge into the light.

But, God be thanked, man was not left to complain, and lament, in the midst of that darkness which his apostacy wove. There were provisions for his rescue, which came into force at the moment of transgression. No sooner had man fallen than prophecy, in the form of a promise, took the span of time, and gathered into a sentence the moral history of the world. And we have great reason for believing that even unto Adam did this promise speak of good things to come, and that he was comforted, in his exile from Paradise, by the hope which it gave him of final deliverance. Compelled though he was to till an earth, on which rested the curse of its Creator, he may have known that there was blessing in store; and that, though he and his children must dig the ground in the sweat of their brow, there would fall on it a sweat like great drops of blood, having virtue to remove the oppressive malediction. It must have been bitter to him

to hear of the thorn and the thistle; but he may have learnt how thorns would be woven into a crown, and placed round the forehead of one who should be the lost "tree of life" to a dying creation. It was only to have been expected, when the fatal act had been committed, that there would have ascended from the earth one fearful cry, and that then an eternal silence would have covered the desecrated globe. But, in place of this—though the gathered night was not at once dispersed—there still went up the anthem of praise from loving herds, and waving corn, and stately forests; and man, in his exile, had an evening and a morning hymn, which spake gratefully of the head of the serpent as bruised by the seed of the woman—and all because God had already discovered himself as our Maker "who giveth songs in the night."

Thus also it has been, and is, with individual cases. There may be many in this assembly who have known what it is to be oppressed with apprehensions of God's wrath against sin. They have passed through that dreary season, when conscience, often successfully resisted, or dragged into slumber, mightily asserts its authority, arrays the transgressions of a life, and anticipates the penalties of an eternity. And we say of the man who is suffering from conviction of sin, that it is more truly night with him, the night of the soul, than with the most wretched of those on whom lie the burdens of temporal wo. And natural theology, as we have already stated, can offer no encouragement in this utter midnight. It may have done its part in producing the convictions, but, in so doing, must have exhausted its resources. All its efforts must have been directed to the furnishing demonstrations of the inflexible government of a God of justice and righteousness; and the more powerful these demonstrations, the more would they shut up the transgressor to the certainty of destruction. And nevertheless, after a time, you find the man, who had been brought into so awful a darkness, and for whose comfort there is nothing to be gained from natural theology, walking in gladness, with a lightened heart and a buoyant spirit. What could not be found in the stores

of natural theology, has been found in those of revealed intelligence, that God can, at the same time, be just and a justifier, that sinners can be pardoned, and sins not go unpunished. Therefore is it that he who was in darkness, the darkness of the soul, is now lifting up his head with joy, and exulting in hope. The Spirit of God, which produced the conviction, has taken of the things of Christ, and, showing them to the soul, made them effectual to conversion. And we call upon you to compare the man in these two estates. With his consciousness of the evil of sin heightened, rather than diminished, you find him changed from the desponding into the triumphant; exhibiting, in the largest measure, the accomplishment of the words, that there shall be given "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." You can offer no account of this surprising transformation, whilst you search for its reasons in natural causes. But when you appeal to the workings of Omnipotence; when you tell us of a propitiation for sin; when you refer to a divine agent, whose special office it is, to bring men to put faith in a sacrifice which reconciled a guilty world to its Creator—then you leave no cause for surprise, that, from a soul, round which had gathered deep and stern shadows, there should be ascending the rich notes of praise, and the stirring strains of hope; but then you are only proving with what exquisite truth it may be said, that God our Maker "giveth songs in the night."

We might easily multiply our illustrations. We might follow the believer through all the stages of his progress from earth to heaven; and where-soever you could show that it was night, there could we show you that God "giveth songs." It is not that he giveth no songs in the day; for he is with his people, and he wakes their praises, in all time of their wealth, as well as in all time of their tribulation. But it is our nature to rejoice when all within and without is undisturbed; the miracle is to "rejoice in tribulation;" and this miracle is continually wrought as the believer presses through the wilderness. The harp of the human spirit never yields such sweet music,

as when its framework is most shattered, and its strings are most torn. Then it is, when the world pronounces the instrument useless, and man would put it away as incapable of melody, that the finger of God delights in touching it, and draws from it a fine swell of harmony. Come night, come calamity, come affliction. God still says to his people, as he said to the Jews, when expecting the irruption of the Assyrian, "ye shall have a song, as in the night."

Is it the loss of property with which believers are visited? Our Maker "giveth songs in the night," and the chorus is heard, we have in heaven "a better, even an enduring substance." Is it the loss of friends? Our Maker, as we have shown you, "giveth songs in the night;" they "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope;" and over the very grave is heard the fine confession, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Have they their seasons of spiritual depression, when they cannot realize their privileges, nor assure themselves of acceptance with God? Indeed this is hard to bear—perhaps the severest of the trials which they are called to endure. This was David's case, when he pathetically exclaimed, "Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Yet the Psalmist could go on, in the very next verse, to declare, "The Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me." And no believer holds fast his confidence, as David did, without proving, that, if God hide for a while the light of his countenance, it is in order to make it more valued; without finding cause to break into the song, "it is good for me that I was afflicted." Let the thickest night gather; let death be at hand; and shall it be said that our text fails of accomplishment! On the contrary, it is here emphatically true that our Maker "giveth songs in the night." The believer in Christ knows and feels that his Redeemer "hath abolished death." He is not insensible to the terrors of death; for he regards the separation of soul and body as a direct consequence of the original curse, and therefore awful and disastrous. But then he is so



assured of immortality and a resurrection, that he can approach the grave with confidence, and even exult that his departure is at hand. What upholds the dying man? What throws over his wasted countenance that air of serenity? What prompts those expressions of peace, those breathings of hope, which seem so little in accordance with his circumstances of trouble and decay? It is that God is whispering to his soul such words as these, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee." It is that his Maker is reminding him of the pledge, that death shall be swallowed up in victory; that he is already causing the minstrelsy of the eternal city to come stealing on his ear—and is not all this the most convincing and touching evidence, that God our Maker "giveth songs in the night?"

Who would not be a believer in Christ, who would not be at peace with God? When such are the privileges of righteousness, the privileges through life, the privileges in death, the wonder is, that all are not eager to close with the offers of the Gospel, and make those privileges their own. Yet, alas, the ministers of Christ have to exclaim, with the prophet, "who hath believed our report?" and, with Elihu, "none saith, where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" There may yet be moral insensibility in numbers who hear me. What shall we say to them? They may have youth on their side, and health, and plenty. The sky may be clear, and the voice of joy may be heard in their dwelling. But

there must come a night, a dreary and oppressive night; for youth must depart, and strength be enfeebled, and sorrow encountered, and the shadows of evening fall upon the path. And what will they do then, if now, as God complains by his prophet, "the harp and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands?" They may have their song now; but then we shall have only the bitter exclamation, "the harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." We warn you in time. Though the firmament be bright, we show you the cloud, small as a man's hand, already rising from the sea; and we urge you to the breaking loose from habits of sin, and fleeing straightway to the Mediator Christ. It is for baubles which they despise when acquired, wealth which they count nothing when gained, gratifications which they loathe so soon as passed, that men sell their souls. And all that we now entreat of the young, is, that they will not, in the spring-time of life, strike this foul bargain. In the name of Him who made you, we beseech you to separate yourselves at once from evil practices and evil associates; lest, in that darkest of all darkness, when the sun is to be "black as sackcloth of hair," and the moon as blood, and the stars are to fall, you may utter nothing but the passionate cry of despair; whilst the righteous are lifting up their heads with joy, and proving that they have trusted in a God "who giveth songs in the night."

## SERMON III.

### TESTIMONY CONFIRMED BY EXPERIENCE.

"As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God; God will establish it for ever."—Psalm 46: 3.

There is a very striking part in the Litany of our church, when, between two earnest supplications for deliverance, God is reminded of the great things which he had wrought in former times. The supplications to which we refer are put into the mouths of the people. "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thy name's sake." "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thine honor." Between these the minister is directed to exclaim, "O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them." We are always much struck with this exclamation, and with the consequent alteration in the plea with which the people urge their suit for deliverance. In the first petition it is, "deliver us for thy name's sake;" in the second, "deliver us for thine honor." The minister has heard the congregation invoking God to come forth to their succor, and humbly reminding him how consistent it would be with all the attributes of his nature—for these are included in his name—to comply with their earnest supplication. And then the minister, as though he knew that there was yet higher ground which the people might take, commemorates the marvellous interpositions of which olden times had set down the records, reminding the congregation, by making confession to God, of deliverances wrought on behalf of their fathers. The people are animated by the recollection. They feel that God has pledged himself, by former answers to prayer, to arise, and shield those who cast themselves on his help. His own glory has

become concerned in the not leaving such to perish; and shall they not then, with fresh confidence, reiterate their petition? No sooner therefore has the minister commemorated God's mercies, than the people, as though they had a new source of hope, press their suit with yet greater earnestness; and their voices mingle in the cry, "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thine honor." Is not this portion of our Litany constructed on the principle, that, what we have heard of God's doings in other times, we may expect to see or experience in our own, provided only there be similarity of circumstance? are not, in short, the exclamation of the minister, and the consequent petition of the people, the expressions of a hope, or rather a belief, that the words of our text shall again be appropriate, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts?"

It must have been to some special instance in which God had wrought a deliverance, parallel to one celebrated in Jewish annals, that reference is made in our text. The statement is exactly what would be uttered, if the parties, who have joined in the quoted sentences of our Litany, were to become the subjects of a divine interposition, similar to those which the minister commemorated. But it is observed by Bishop Horsley, that there is no recorded interference of God on behalf of Jerusalem, which answers to the language employed in this Psalm. And it is therefore probable that a prophetic, or, at least, a spiritual interpretation must be given to the hymn. Indeed there are expressions which will not



admit of being applied to the literal Jerusalem. Thus, in our text, it is said of the city of our God, "God will establish it for ever"—a prediction which cannot belong to the metropolis of Judea, which was often given up to the spoiler, but which holds good of that spiritual city, the Church of God, against which Christ declared that "the gates of hell shall never prevail." And when, towards the conclusion of the Psalm, the succored people are bidden to march in joyful procession round their beautiful city, that they might see how unscathed were its walls, how glorious its structures—"walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following"—you can scarcely fail to feel, that the thing enjoined is the considering and admiring the privileges and securities of the church, in order that we may both prize them ourselves, and be incited to the preserving them for our children.

We may therefore regard our text as uttered by members of the Church of Christ, that city of God which is made glad by the streams of the river of life. It is an assertion, made by those who had fled to the church for safety, expecting deliverance within its walls, that their own experience bore out to the letter what had been reported by the believers of other days. The difference between hearing and seeing, of which they make mention, is the difference between receiving truth on the testimony of others, and the being ourselves its witnesses—a distinction such as that which the patriarch Job drew, when humbled through a personal acquaintance with the dealings of God, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And the great principle, or fact, which it will become us to endeavor to establish and illustrate, in discoursing on our text, is, that before there is any personal experience in matters of religion, there may be an acting on the experience of others, and that, wheresoever this is faithfully done, the personal experience will be the probable result. We proceed at once to the exhibiting this

principle or fact; designing to adduce, if possible, the most practical, as well as the most apposite instances, in which men may say, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts."

Now we shall begin with an application of the principle involved in our text, which has been made at great length by modern writers,\* and whose importance seems to claim for it the closest attention. We refer to the way in which men reach their persuasion that the Bible is God's word; for they evidently, for the most part, receive the Bible as inspired, long before they can prove any thing in regard of its inspiration. We put the Bible into the hands of our children, as the word of the living God, and therefore demanding a reverence which can be claimed by no other volume in the whole circle of authorship. And our children grow up with what might almost be called an innate persuasion of the inspiration of Scripture; they are all but born with the belief; and they carry it with them to riper years, rather as a received axiom, than as a demonstrated verity. It is almost exclusively on hearsay, if we may use the word, that the Bible is taken as divine, and the Apocrypha passed by as human; so that numbers, who are perhaps strenuous for the right of private judgment, do virtually, in the most important matter, receive and reject on the sole authority of the church.

And it is well that it is so. If there were nothing of this taking upon trust; if every man, in place of having to set himself to the perusal of a volume which he regards as divine, must first pick out by laborious study, from all the authorship of antiquity, the few pages which really bear the signature of heaven, there would be an arrest on the progress of christianity; for the life of each would be exhausted, ere he had constructed the book by which he must be guided. And yet it cannot be taken as a very satisfactory account of human belief, that it thus follows upon human bidding. But it is here, as we believe, that the principle of our text comes beautifully into operation. The church, like a parent of a family, gives

\* Particularly Dr. Chalmers, in the fourth volume of his works.

a volume into the hands of those who join her communion, bidding them receive it as divine, and study it as the word which can alone guide them to glory. And her members, like the children of the household, have no better reason, at first, for receiving the Bible as inspired, than because they have heard so in the city of the Lord. They yield so much of respect to the directions of their authorized teachers, or to the impressions which have been graven on them from infancy, as to give their homage to a volume which is presumed to bear so lofty a character. But then, though it may thus be on hearsay that they first receive the Bible as inspired, it is not on hearsay that they continue to receive it. We speak now of those who have searched the Scriptures for everlasting life, and who feel that they have found therein a revelation of the alone mode of forgiveness. We speak of those in whom the word has "wrought effectually;" and we confidently affirm of them, that, though at one time they believed in the inspiration of the canonical Scriptures, because their parents taught it, or their ministers maintained it, yet now are they in possession of a personal, experimental, evidence, which is thoroughly conclusive on this fundamental point. It is not that they have gone through the laborious demonstrations by which the learned have sustained the claims of the Old and New Testaments. It is comparatively a very small fraction of a community who can examine the grounds on which the church rests her judgment; and it is with the case of the great mass that we now wish to deal.

But we will give you what we reckon the history of the uneducated believer, so far as his acquaintance with revelation is concerned. He may perhaps have been neglected in boyhood, so that he has grown up in ignorance; but he is visited by the minister of his parish in some seasons of affliction, when the ruggedness of his nature is somewhat worn down by sorrow. The minister presses upon him the study of the Bible, as of the word of his Creator, assuring him that he will therein find God's will as revealed by his Spirit. The cottager has undoubtedly heard of the Bible before; and it is no news to

him, that it passes as a more than human book. But he has never yet given heed to what he heard: the book has been unopened, notwithstanding the high claims which it was known to advance. But now, softened by the minister's kindness, and moved by his statements, he sets himself diligently to the perusal of Scripture, and steadily attends its Sabbath expositions. And thus, though he is acting only what he has heard, he brings himself under the self-evidencing power of Scripture, that power by which the contents of the Bible serve as its credentials. And this self-evidencing power is wonderfully great. The more than human knowledge which the Scripture displays in regard of the most secret workings of the heart; the marvellous and unerring precision with which the provisions of the Gospel adapt themselves to the known wants and disabilities of our nature; the constancy with which the promises and directions of holy writ, if put to the proof, are made good in one's own case—these and the like evidences of the divine origin of the Bible, press themselves quickly on the most illiterate student, when he searches it in humility, hoping to find, as he has been told that he shall, a message from God which will guide him towards heaven. He began on the testimony of another; but, after a while, he goes forward on his own testimony. And though he has not been sitting in judgment on the credentials of christianity, yet has he possessed himself of its contents; and on these he has found so much of the impress, and from them there has issued so much of the voice of Deity, that he is as certified in his own mind, and on grounds as satisfactory, of the inspiration of Scripture, as any laborious and scientific inquirer, who has rifled the riches of centuries, and brought them all to do homage before our holy religion. God has no more given to the learned the monopoly of evidence, than to the wealthy the monopoly of benevolence. The poor man can exercise benevolence, for the widow's two mites may outweigh the noble's coffers: and the poor man may have an evidence that God is in the Bible, for it may speak to his heart as no human book can.

And if you contrast the man, when



the minister of Christ first entered his cottage, with what he is after patient obedience to the injunctions of the church—in the one case, the mere giver of assent to a fellow-man's testimony; in the other, the delighted possessor of a "witness in himself;" in the first instance, a believer not so much in the inspiration of Scripture, as in the veracity of the individual who announces it, but, in the second, a believer in that inspiration, because conscience and understanding and heart have all felt and confessed the superhuman authorship—Oh, as, by thus contrasting and comparing, you determine, that, through simply acting on what was told him, the man has been carried forward to a personal, experimental, demonstration of its truth, you must admit that he may class himself with those who can say, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts."

But the principle has been carried yet further than this, and, we think, with great justice. It must be believed of the large mass of protestants, that they have never even read the apocryphal books, much less searched into the reasons on which these books are pronounced not inspired. Here therefore it cannot be said, that what has been heard is also seen in the city of God. We can prove this in regard of the Canonical Scriptures, because we can prove, that, when perused in obedience to what is heard, they quickly evidence their origin. But we seem unable to prove this in regard of the Apocryphal Scriptures; for they are not used to be subjected to any such test.

But suppose they were subjected to the like test, and why might we not expect the like result? There is to our mind something inexpressibly grand and beautiful in the thought, that God dwells, as it were, in the syllables which he has indited for the instruction of humankind, so that he may be found there when diligently sought, though he do not thus inhabit any other writing. He breathed himself into the compositions of prophets, and apostles, and evangelists; and there, as in the mystic recesses of an everlasting sanctuary, he still resides, ready to disclose himself to the hum-

ble, and to be evoked by the prayerful. But in regard of every other book, however fraught it may be with the maxims of piety, however pregnant with momentous truths, there is nothing of this shrining himself of Deity in the depths of its meaning. Men may be instructed by its pages, and draw from them hope and consolation. But never will they find there the burning Shekinah, which proclaims the actual presence of God; never hear a voice, as from the solitudes of an oracle, pronouncing the words of immortality.

And we should never fear the bringing any canonical book, or any apocryphal, to the test thus supposed. Let a man take a canonical book, and let him take an apocryphal; and let him determine to study both on the supposition that both are divine, because doubtful whether the church be right in her decision, or desirous to gain evidence for himself. And if he be a sincere inquirer after truth, one really anxious to ascertain, in order that he may perform, the whole will of God, we know not why he should not experience the accomplishment of Christ's words, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," and thus reach a sound decision as to which book is inspired, and which not. As he studies the inspired book, with humility and prayer, he will find its statements brought home to his conscience and heart, with that extraordinary force which is never attached to a human composition. He may not be able to construct a clear argument for the divine origin of the book; yet will the correspondence between what the book states, and what he experiences, and the constancy with which the fulfilment of its promises follows on submission to its precepts, combine into an evidence, thoroughly satisfactory to himself, that the pages which he reads had God for their author. But as he studies the non-inspired book, he will necessarily miss these tokens and impresses of Deity. There will be none of those mysterious soundings of the voice of the ever-living God, which he has learnt to expect, and which he has always heard, where-soever the writers have indeed been inspired. His own diligence may be the same, his faith, his prayerfulness.

But it is impossible there should be those manifestations of superhuman wisdom, those invariable sequences of fulfilled promises on obeyed precepts, which, in the other case, attested, at each step of his progress, that the document in his hands was a revelation from above.

It may be said that all the argument, which he can thus obtain, must be vague and inconclusive, a thing of imagination rather than of reason, and therefore, in the largest sense, liable to error. But we rejoice, on the contrary, in believing in the thorough sufficiency of the poor man's argument for the inspiration of Scripture. It is an argument to his own conscience, an argument to his own heart. It is the argument drawn from the experienced fact, that the Bible and the soul, with her multiplied feelings and powers, fit into each other, like two parts of a complicated machine, proving, in their combination, that each was separately the work of the same divine artist. And you may think that the poor man may be mistaken; but he feels that he cannot be mistaken. The testimony is like a testimony to his senses; if he cannot transfer it to another, it is incontestable to himself, and therefore gives as much fixedness to the theology of the cottage as ever belonged to the theology of the academy.

And if he can thus prove, from his own experience, the divine origin of the inspired book, he may of course equally prove, from his own experience, the human origin of the non-inspired. The absence of certain tokens in the one case, will be as conclusive to him as their presence in the other. So that, we may affirm of all classes of christians, provided only they be sincere and prayerful in their inquiry after truth, that, if not content with the decision of the church, they may put to the proof what they have heard in the city of our God. Let them take the apocrypha, and let them study it on the supposition that its books are equally inspired with those to which their church assigns so lofty a character. And their spirits may be stirred within them, as they read of the chivalrous deeds of the Maccabean princes, and even their tears may be drawn forth, as the Book of Wisdom pours its ele-

giac poetry over those who die young. But they will not find that moral probing, that direction of the heart, that profundity of meaning which makes a single text like a mine from which new treasures may continually be dug, those flashes of truth which suddenly issue from what had long seemed dark sayings. These and the like evidences that the living God is in the book will be wanting, however its pages may be printed with heroic story, or glowing with poetic fire. Even though the style and sentiment may be similar to those to which they have been used in holy writ, they will not experience the same elevation of soul as when they trust themselves to the soarings of Isaiah, the same sweepings of the chords of the heart as when they join in the hymns of David, nor the same echo of the conscience as when they listen to the remonstrances of St. Peter or St. Paul. And what then is to prevent their being their own witnesses to the non-inspiration of the apocryphal, as well as to the inspiration of the canonical Scriptures? What is to prevent their bringing their own experience in confirmation of what had originally been told them by the church, and thus joining themselves to those who can say, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts?"

Now the points on which we have thus touched, have been handled at great length, and with consummate ability, by modern writers. And we have dwelt on them, not with any idea of adding to the strength with which they have been asserted, or the clearness with which they have been illustrated; but simply in the hope of fixing the attention of the younger part of this audience on what is called the self-evidencing power of Scripture. With all our desire that they should be thoroughly masters of the external evidences of christianity, we are unspeakably more anxious that they should labor to possess themselves of the internal; for, in searching after these, they must necessarily study the Bible itself. If they will learn to view the contents of Scripture as themselves its credentials, we shall engage them in the most hopeful of all studies, the study of God's word as addressing itself to the heart, and not merely to the head. For



there may be an intellectual theology; religion may be reduced into a science; and the writers on the evidences, and the commentators on the text of the Bible, may just do for christianity what the laborious and the learned have done for various branches of natural philosophy; make truths bright rather than sharp, clear to the understanding, but without hold on the affections. And this is not the christianity which we wish to find amongst you, the christianity of the man who can defeat a sceptic, and then lose his soul. We would have you well-read—too well-read you cannot be—in what has been written in defence of the faith; but, above all, we would fasten you to the prayerful study of the sacred volume itself; this will lead you to the hearing God's voice in the Bible, and, until that is heard, the best champion of truth may be far from the kingdom of heaven.

But there is yet a more obvious application of the words of our text, one which, though it may have suggested itself to your minds, is of too practical a kind to be omitted by the preacher. There is a reference in the passage to the unchangeableness of God, to the similarity of his dealings with men, when there is a similarity of circumstance. It is said of God by Solomon, that he "requireth that which is past." He seeks again that which is past, recalling, as it were, the proceedings, whether in judgment or mercy, of departed ages, and repeating them to the present generation. And it is on this account that there is such value in the registered experience of the believers of other days, so that the biography of the righteous is among the best treasures possessed by a church. It is, in one sense at least, a vast advantage to us that we live late in the world. We have all the benefit of the spiritual experience of many centuries, which has been bequeathed to us as a legacy of more worth than large wealth or far-spreading empire. We have not, therefore, to tread a path in which we have had but few precursors. Far as the eye can reach, the road we have to traverse is crowded with beckoning forms, as though the sepulchres gave up their host of worthies, that we might be animated by the view of the victorious throng. And this is an advantage

which it is hardly possible to overrate. You have only to add to this an acquaintance with the unchangeableness of God, and there seems all that can be needed to the encouragement and confidence of the righteous. The unchangeableness of God assures us that he will do in our own days, as he has done in earlier; the registered experience of former times instructs us as to the accuracy with which he has made good the declarations of Scripture: and by combining these two, the assurance and the instruction, we gain a witness, which nothing should shake, that, with the Bible for our guide, we shall have peace for our present portion, unbounded glory for our future.

There is here a new witness for the Bible, a witness accessible to the meanest, the witness of happy lives and triumphant deaths. The very peasant masters and rejoices in this evidence. The histories of good men find their way into his hamlet; and even in the village church-yard sleep some whose righteousness will be long had in remembrance. And knowing, as he does, that those, whose bright names thus hallow the annals whether of his country or his valley, were "acceptable to God, and approved of men," through simply submitting themselves to the guidance of Scripture; that they were Bible precepts which made them the example and blessing of their fellows, and Bible promises which nerved them for victory over sorrow and death—has he not a noble evidence on the side of Scripture, an evidence against which the taunts of scepticism are directed without effect, an evidence which augments with every piece of christian biography that comes into his possession, and with every instance of christian consistency that comes under his observation?

And what he thus hears in the city of God, acts, on every account, as a stimulus to his own faith and steadfastness. The registered experience of those who have gone before, encourages him to expect the same mercies from the same God. He kindles as he reads their story. Their memory rouses him. He asks the mantle of the ascending prophet, that he may divide with it the waters which had before owned its power. Thus what he has

heard in the city of his God confirms his diligence and animates his hope. He takes the experience of others, and proceeds upon the supposition that it may be made his own. And it is made his own. Through faith the same wonders are wrought. Through prayer the same mercies are obtained. The same promises are accomplished, the same assistances communicated, the same victories achieved. And as the man remembers how his spirit glowed at the mention of noble things done on behalf of the righteous; how the records of good men's lives soothed him, and cheered him, and excited him; how their prayers taught him to be a suppliant, and their praises moved him to be hopeful; how they seemed to have lived for his instruction, and died for his comfort—and then as he feels, how, through treading the same path, and trusting in the same Mediator, he has already obtained a measure, and may expect a yet larger, of the blessings wherewith they were blessed of their God—oh, his language will be that of our text; and he will join, heart and soul, with those who are confessing, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of our God."

There will be a yet finer use of these words: they shall be woven into a nobler than the noblest earthly chant. Are we deceiving men, are we merely sketching ideal pictures, to whose beauty and brilliancy there is nothing correspondent in future realities, when we expatiate on the glories of heaven, and task imagination to build its palaces, and portray its inhabitants? Yes, in one sense we deceive them: they are but ideal pictures which we draw. What human pencil can delineate scenes in which God manifests his presence? What human coloring emulate the effulgence which issues from his throne? But we deceive them only through inability to rise sufficiently high; we exhaust imagination, but not the thousandth part is told. They are deceived, only if they think we tell them all, if they take the pictures which we draw as perfect representations of the majesty of the future.

When we speak to them of the deep and permanent repose of heaven; when we enlarge on the manifestations of Deity; when we declare that Christ, as

"the Minister of the Sanctuary," will unfold to his church the mysteries which have perplexed them; when we gather together what is gorgeous, and precious, and beautiful, in the visible creation, and crowd it into the imagery wherewith we delineate the final home of the saints; when we take the sun from the firmament, that the Lord God may shine there, and remove all temples from the city, that the Almighty may be its Sanctuary, and hush all human minstrelsy, that the immense tide of song may roll from thousand times ten thousand voices—we speak only the words of truth and soberness, though we have not compassed the greatness, nor depicted the loveliness, of the portion which awaits the disciples of Christ. If there be one passage of Scripture which we may venture to put into the lips of redeemed men in glory, it is our text; in this instance, we may be confident that the change from earth to heaven will not have made the language of the one unsuited to the other. Oh, as the shining company take the circuit of the celestial city; as they "walk about Zion, and go round about her," telling the towers thereof, marking well her bulwarks, and considering her palaces; who can doubt that they say one to another, "as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God?" We heard that here "the wicked cease from troubling," and now we behold the deep rich calm. We heard that here we should be with the Lord, and now we see him face to face. We heard that here we should know, and now the ample page of universal truth is open to our inspection. We heard that here, with the crown on the head, and the harp in the hand, we should execute the will, and hymn the praises, of our God, and now we wear the diadem, and wake the melody. They can take to themselves the words which the dying leader Joshua used of the Israelites, "not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us; all are come to pass, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

Shall it be said of any amongst ourselves, that they heard of heaven, but made no effort to behold it? Is there one who can be indifferent to the an-



rouncement of its glories, one who can feel utterly careless whether he ever prove for himself, that there has been no deceit, no exaggeration, but that it is indeed a surpassingly fair land which is to be everlastingly the home of those who believe in the Redeemer? Everlastingly the home—for we must not overlook the concluding words of our text, "God will establish it for ever." The walls of that city shall never decay; the lustres of that city shall never grow dim; the melodies of that city shall never be hushed. And is it of a city such as this that any one of us can be indifferent whether or no he be finally an inhabitant? We will not believe it. The old and the young, the rich and the poor, all must be ready to bind themselves by a solemn vow, that they will "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." It is not the voice of a solitary and weak fellow-man which now tells you of hea-

ven. God is summoning you. Angels are summoning you. The myriads who have gone before are summoning you. We are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses." The battlements of the sky seem thronged with those who have fought the good fight of faith. They bend down from the eminence, and bid us ascend, through the one Mediator, to the same lofty dwelling. They shall not call in vain. We know their voices, as they sweep by us solemnly and sweetly. And we think, and we trust, that there will not be one of you who will leave the sanctuary without some such reflection and prayer as this—I have heard of heaven, I have been told of its splendors and of its happiness; grant, gracious and eternal Father, that I fail not at last to be associated with those who shall rejoicingly exclaim, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts."

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## SERMON IV.

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### THE GENERAL RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

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"Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."—St. John, 5 : 28, 29.

You will at once perceive that these words of our Savior are not to be understood without a reference to those by which they are preceded. They show that surprise was both felt and expressed at something which he had just said; for they are a direction to his audience not to marvel, or wonder, at what he had affirmed, seeing that he had to state what was yet more astonishing. If you examine the context of the passage, you will find that our Lord had been speaking of the effects which should follow upon belief of his word, and that he had used language in

regard of those effects, which borrowed its imagery from death and a resurrection. This surprised and displeased his hearers. They could not understand how the word of Christ could possess such a power as he had claimed; and they perhaps even doubted whether the new creation of which he spake, the quickening of souls "dead in trespasses and sins," ever took place.

It was to meet these feelings, which he perceived stirring in their minds, that Christ proceeded to address them in the words of our text. "Marvel not

at this." As though he had said, you are staggered at what I have declared, fancying it incredible, or, at least, far beyond my power. But I have a yet more wonderful thing of which to tell you, a thing that shall be done by myself, though requiring still greater might. You are amazed that I should speak of raising those who are morally dead; but "marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear my voice."

This appears to us the true account of our Lord's reasoning. The resurrection of the body, the calling from the graves those who had long slumbered therein, is represented as a more wonderful thing than what had just excited the amazement of the Jews. And thus the passage sets, as we think, the resurrection of the body under a most imposing point of view, making it the great prodigy in God's dealings with our race. That there is nothing else to marvel at, in comparison of the resurrection of the dead—this seems to us the assertion of Christ, and such assertion demands a most careful consideration. Of course, independently on this assertion, there is a great deal in the passage which affords material for profitable meditation, seeing that the whole business of the last audit is summarily, but strikingly, described. The remarkable feature, however, of the text is undoubtedly that of its making the resurrection of the body the first of all marvels; and it is, therefore, to the illustration of this that we shall give our chief care, though not to the exclusion of the more general truths affirmed by our Lord.

Now we are accustomed to think, and, doubtless, with justice, that there is an affinity between God and our souls, but nothing of the kind between God and our bodies. We do not indeed presume to speak of the human soul, any more than of the human body, as having congeniality, or sameness of nature, with the great first cause, the self-existent Deity. But we may venture to declare that all the separation which there is between the soul and the body, is an advance towards the nature of God, so that the soul, inasmuch as it is spiritual, far more nearly resembles the divine Being than the body, inasmuch as it is material

And when we reach this conclusion, we are at a point from which to view with great amazement the resurrection of the body. So long as a divine interference is limited to the soul, we may be said to be prepared, at least in a degree, for whatever can be told us of its greatness and disinterestedness. We attach a dignity to the soul, which, though it could not, after there had been sin, establish any claim to the succors of God, seems to make it, if not to be expected, yet not to be wondered at, that it was not abandoned to degradation and ruin. The soul is so much more nearly of the same nature with God than the body, that a spiritual resurrection appears a thousand-fold more likely than a corporeal. And you are to observe that there is nothing in the nature of the case, to make it clear to us, that, if the soul were redeemed, so also must be the body. The ordinary current of thought and feeling may almost be said to be against the redemption of the body. The body is felt to be an incumbrance to the soul, hindering it in its noblest occupations, and contributing nothing to its most elevated pleasure. So far from the soul being incapable of happiness, if detached from the body, it is actually its union with the body, which, to all appearance, detains it from happiness; so that, in its finest and loftiest musings, its exclamation often is, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!" Even now the soul is often able to rise above the body, to detach itself, for a while, from matter, and to soar into regions which it feels to be more its home than this earth. And when compelled to return from so splendid an excursion, there is a sentiment of regret that it must still tabernacle in flesh; and it is conscious of longing for a day when it may finally abandon its perishable dwelling.

Thus there is nothing of a felt necessity for the re-union of the soul to the body, to guide us in expecting the corporeal as well as the spiritual resurrection. We might almost affirm that the feeling is all the other way. And though, through some fine workings of reason, or, through attention to lingering traces of patriarchal religion, men, destitute of the light of revelation, have reached a persuasion of the soul's im-



mortality, never have they formed even a conjecture of the body's resurrection. They have imaged to themselves the spirit, which they felt burning and beating within them, emancipated from thralldom, and admitted into a new and eternal estate. But they have consigned the body to the interminable dishonors of the grave; and never, in the boldest imaginings, whether of their philosophy or their poetry, have they thrown life into the ashes of the sepulchre. It is almost the voice of nature, that the soul survives death: the soul gives its own testimony, and often so impressively, that a man could as easily doubt his present as his future existence. But there is no such voice put forth in regard of the body; no solemn and mysterious whisperings are heard from its resting-place, the echo of a truth which seems syllabled within us, that bone shall come again to bone, and sinews bind them, and skin cover them, and breath stir them.

And we may safely argue, that, if the immortality of the soul be an article of natural theology, but the resurrection of the body were never even thought of by the most profound of its disciples, there can be no feeling in man that the matter, as well as the spirit, of which he is composed, must reappear in another state of being, in order either to the possibility or the felicity of his existence. So that—for this is the point to which our remarks tend—we may declare of the resurrection of the body, that it is altogether an unexpected fact, one which no exercise of reason could have led us to conjecture, and for which there is not even that natural longing which might be interpreted into an argument of its probability. It is not then when God interposes on behalf of the soul, it is when he interposes on behalf of the body, that the great cause is given for amazement. A spark, one might almost call it, of himself, an emanation from his own immortality, mighty in its powers, mysterious in its wanderings, sublime in its anticipations, we scarcely wonder that a spiritual thing like the soul should engage the carefulness of its Maker, and that, if it sully its brightness, and mar its strength, he should provide for its final recovery. But the body—matter, which is man's

link of association with the lowest of the brutes, and which natural and revealed theology are alike earnest in removing to the farthest possible distance from the divine nature—the body, whose members are “the instruments of unrighteousness,” whose wants make our feebleness, whose lusts are our tempters, whose infirmities our torment—that this ignoble and decaying thing should be cared for by God, who is ineffably more spiritual than spirit, so that he designs its re-appearance in his own immediate presence, what is comparable in its wonderfulness to this? Prodigy of prodigies, that this corruptible should put on incorruption, this mortal immortality. And scribes and pharisees might have listened with amazement, and even with incredulity, as the Lord our Redeemer affirmed the effects which would be wrought on the soul through the doctrines and deeds of his mission. But he had stranger things to tell; for he had to speak of the body as well as of the soul, rising from its ruins, and gloriously reconstructed. Yes, observing how his hearers were surprised, because he had spoken of the spiritually dead as quickened by his word, he might well say unto them, “marvel not at this,” and give as his reason, “for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear my voice.”

Now, throughout this examination of the truth, that the resurrection of the body furnishes, in an extraordinary degree, cause of wonder and surprise, we have made no reference to the display of divine power which this resurrection must present. We have simply enlarged on what may be called the unexpectedness of the event, proving this unexpectedness from the inferiority of matter, its utter want of affinity to Deity, and the feelings of even man himself in regard to its detracting from his dignity and happiness.

But we do not know, that, in the whole range of things effected by God, there is aught so surprising, regard being had only to the power displayed, as the resurrection of the body. If you will ponder, for a few moments, the facts of a resurrection, you will probably allow that the power which must be exerted in order to the final recon-

struction of every man's body, is more signal than that displayed in any spiritual renovation, or in any of those operations which we are able to trace in the visible universe. You are just to think that this framework of flesh, in which my soul is now enclosed, will be reduced at death to the dust from which it was taken. I cannot tell where or what will be my sepulchre—whether I shall sleep in one of the quiet churchyards of my own land, or be exposed on some foreign shore, or fall a prey to the beasts of the desert, or seek a tomb in the depths of the unfathomable waters. But an irreversible sentence has gone forth—"dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return"—and assuredly, ere many years, and perhaps even ere many days have elapsed, must my "earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved," rafter from rafter, beam from beam, and the particles, of which it has been curiously compounded, be separated from each other, and perhaps scattered to the four winds of heaven. And who will pretend to trace the wanderings of these particles, into what other substances they may enter, of what other bodies they may form part so as to appear and disappear many times in living shape before the dawn of the great Easter of the universe? There is manifestly the most thorough possibility, that the elements of which my body is composed, may have belonged to the bone and flesh of successive generations; and that, when I shall have passed away and be forgotten, they will be again wrought into the structure of animated beings.

And when you think that my body, at the resurrection, must have at least so much of its original matter, as shall be necessary for the preservation of identity, for the making me know and feel myself the very same being who sinned, and suffered, and was disciplined on earth, you must allow that nothing short of infinite knowledge and power could prevail to the watching, and disentangling, and keeping duly separate, whatever is to be again builded into a habitation for my spirit, so that it may be brought together from the four ends of the earth, detached from other creatures, or extracted from other substances. This would be indeed a wonderful thing, if it were true

of none but myself, if it were only in my solitary case that a certain portion of matter had thus to be watched, kept distinct though mingled, and appropriated to myself whilst belonging to others. But try to suppose the same holding good of every human being, of Adam, and each member of his countless posterity, and see whether the resurrection will not utterly confound and overburden the mind. To every individual in the interminable throng shall his own body be given, a body so literally his own, that it shall be made up, to at least a certain extent, of the matter which composed it whilst he dwelt on this earth. And yet this matter may have passed through innumerable changes. It may have circulated through the living tribes of many generations; or it may have been waving in the trees of the forest; or it may have floated on the wide waters of the deep. But there has been an eye upon it in all its appropriations, and in all its transformations; so that, just as though it had been indelibly stamped, from the first, with the name of the human being to whom it should finally belong, it has been unerringly reserved for the great day of resurrection. Thus myriads upon myriads of atoms—for you may count up till imagination is wearied, and then reckon that you have but one unit of the still inapproachable sum—myriads upon myriads of atoms, the dust of kingdoms, the ashes of all that have lived, are perpetually jostled, and mingled, and separated, and animated, and swept away, and reproduced, and nevertheless, not a solitary particle but holds itself ready, at the sound of the last trump, to combine itself with a multitude of others, in a human body in which they once met perhaps a thousand years before.

We frankly own that this appears to us among the most inscrutable of wonders. That God should have produced countless worlds, and that he should marshal all their motions, as they walk the immensity of his empire—it is an amazing contemplation; and the mind cannot compass the greatness of a power which had only to speak and it was done, and which hath ever since upheld its own magnificent creation, in all the grandeur of its structures, and in all the harmony of its relations. But,



with all its majesty, there is a simplicity in the mechanism of systems and constellations; every star has its place and its orbit; and we see no traces of a complication, or confusion, which might render necessary unwearied and infinite watchfulness, in order to the preventing universal disorder. And it is again a surprising truth, that the Spirit of God should act on the human soul; that, secretly and silently, it should renovate its decayed powers, refine its affections, and awaken the dormant immortality. Yet even here we may speak of simplicity—each soul, like each star, has its own sphere of motion; each is distinct from each; and none has ever to be dissolved, and mingled, like the body, with the elements of a million others.

It still then remains a kind of marvel amongst marvels, that there hath not died the man who shall not live again, live again in that identical body which his spirit abandoned when summoned back to God. And upon this account, upon account of the apparently vaster power displayed in a resurrection, may we suppose that Christ bade his hearers withhold their amazement at what he had advanced. Yes, and we feel that he might have spoken of every other portion of God's dealings with our race, and, without deprecating the wonderfulness of other things, have declared, at each step, that he had stranger truths in store. He might have spoken of creation; and, whilst an audience were confounded at the story of animate and inanimate things starting suddenly into being, he might have added, "marvel not at this." He might have spoken, as he did speak, of a spiritual regeneration pervading large masses of the family of man; and, whilst those who heard him were looking surprised and incredulous, he might have added, as he did add, "marvel not at this." For he had to speak of a rising of the sepulchres, of the re-animating the dust of buried generations. And this was to speak of earth, and sea, and air, resolving themselves suddenly into the flesh and sinew of human-kind. This was to speak of countless particles, some from the east and others from the west, these from the north, and those from the south, moved by mysterious impulse, and combining into the limbs of patri-

archs, and prophets, and priests, and kings, and people. This was to speak of the re-appearance of every human being that ever moved on the face of the earth—the old man who sunk beneath the burden of years, and the young man who perished in his prime, and the infant who just opened his eyes on a sinful and sad world, and then closed them as though terrified—all reproduced, though all had been dispersed like chaff before the hurricane, all receiving their original elements, though those elements had been the play-things of the winds, and the fuel for the flames, and the foam upon the waters. And if this were indeed the speaking of a general resurrection, oh, then our Lord might have already been affirming what was wonderful; but, whatsoever that had been, he might have gone on to repress the astonishment of his hearers, saying unto them, "marvel not at this," and giving as his reason, "for the hour is coming," in which all that are in the graves shall hear my voice."

Now we have probably advanced enough in explanation of what perhaps at first seems hardly to have been expected, namely, that our Lord should represent other wonders, even that of the spiritually passing from death unto life, as not to be wondered at, in comparison with the resurrection of the body. We proceed, therefore, to the examining what Christ asserts in regard of those sublime transactions which will be associated with this surpassingly strange event.

"The hour is coming." More than eighteen hundred years have elapsed, since he who spake as "never man spake," and who could utter nothing but truth, made this assertion, an assertion which implied that the hour was at hand. But the dead are yet in their graves; no vivifying voice has been heard in the sepulchres. We know however that "a thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years." We count it not therefore strange that the predicted hour, the hour so full of mystery and might, has not yet arrived. But it must come; it may not perhaps be distant; and there may be some of us, for aught we can tell, who shall be alive on the earth when the voice issues forth, the

voice which shall be echoed from the sea, and the city, and the mountain, and the desert, all creation hearkening, and all that hath ever lived simultaneously responding. But whether we be of the quick or of the dead, on the morning of the resurrection, we must hear the voice, and join ourselves to the swarming throng which presses forward to judgment. And whose is the voice that is thus irresistible, which is heard even in the graves of the earth, and in the caverns of the deep, and which is heard only to be obeyed? Know ye not that voice? Ye have heard it before. It is the voice which said, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is the voice which prayed on behalf of murderers, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." It is the voice which said, "It is finished," pronouncing the completion of the work of human redemption. Yes, ye have heard that voice before. Ye have heard it in the ministrations of the Gospel. It hath called to you, it hath pleaded with you. And those who have listened to it in life, and who have obeyed it when it summoned them to take up the cross, to them it will be a mighty comfort, that, in the voice which is shaking the universe, and wakening the dead, they recognize the tones of Him who could be "touched with a feeling of their infirmities."

For it is, we think, one of the most beautiful of the arrangements which characterize the Gospel, that the offices of Redeemer and Judge meet in the same person, and that person divine. We call it a beautiful arrangement, because securing for us tenderness as well as equity, the sympathies of a friend, as well as the disinterestedness of a most righteous arbiter. Had the judge been only man, the imperfection of his nature would have made us expect much of error in his verdicts. Had he been only God, the distance between him and us would have made us fear it impossible, that, in determining our lot, he would take into account our feebleness and trials. But in the person of Christ there is that marvellous combination which we seek in the Judge of the whole human race. He is God, and, therefore, must he know every particular of character. But he is

also man, and, therefore, can he put himself into the position of those who are brought to his bar. And because the Judge is thus the Mediator, the judgment-seat can be approached with confidence and gladness. The believer in Christ, who hearkened to the suggestions of God's Spirit, and brake away from the trammels of sin, shall know the Son of man, as he comes down in the magnificent sternness of celestial authority. And we say not that it shall be altogether without dread or apprehension, that the righteous, starting from the sleep of death, shall hear the deepening roll of the archangel's summons, and behold the terrific pomp of heavenly judicature. But we are certain that they will be assured and comforted, as they gaze upon their Judge, and recognize their surety. Words such as these will occur to them, "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." "By that man." The man who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." The man who uttered the pathetic words, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together." The man who was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." The man who sat in weariness by the well of Samaria; the man who wept in anguish at the grave of Lazarus; the man who compassionated the weakness of his slumbering disciples; the man whose "sweat was as it were great drops of blood," and who submitted to be scourged, and buffeted, and crucified, "for us men, and for our salvation." Yes, this is the very being who is to gather the nations before him, and determine the everlasting condition of each individual. And though we dare not attempt to define the motions of those most assured of deliverance, when standing, in their resurrection-bodies, on the earth, as it heaves with strange convulsions, and looking on a firmament lined with ten thousand times ten thousand angels, and beholding a throne of fire and cloud, such as was never piled for mortal sovereignty, and hearing sounds of which even imagination cannot catch the echo—yet is it enough to assure us that they will be full of hope and of glad-



ness, to tell us that he who will speak to them is he who once died for them—Oh, there will be peace to the righteous, when "the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll," if it be Christ who saith, "the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear my voice."

But with what feelings will those hear the voice, of whom the Savior may affirm, "I have called, and ye refused; ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof?" They too shall know the voice; and it shall be to them as the voice of despised mercy, the voice of slighted love. They shall be more startled, and more pierced, and more lacerated, by that voice, than if it had never before been heard, or if its tones were not remembered. The sound of that voice will at once waken the memory of warnings that have been neglected, invitations refused, privileges unimproved. It will be painfully eloquent of all that was vainly done to win them to repentance, and therefore terribly reproachful, ominous of a doom which it is now too late to avert. They would have more hope, they would be less beaten down by a consciousness that they were about to enter on everlasting misery, if a strange voice had summoned them from the tomb, a voice that had never spoken tenderly and plaintively, never uttered the earnest beseechings, the touching entreaties of a friend, a brother, a Redeemer. Any voice rather than this voice. None could be so dirge-like, so full of condemnation, so burdened with malediction, as that which had often said, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?"

But this is the voice; and when this voice is heard, "all that are in the graves shall come forth." And under how many divisions shall the swarming myriads be arranged? They have had very different opportunities and means, and you might have expected them to be separated into great variety of classes. But we read of only one division, of only two classes. "They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." There is not, you observe, any thing intermediate. All rise, so that

there is no annihilation; all rise, either to be unspeakably happy, or unspeakably miserable, for there are but two resurrections. We may indeed be sure that both heaven and hell will present recompenses suited to all varieties of character, and that in the allotments of both there will be a graduated scale. But let it never, on this account, be supposed that there may be a happiness so imperfect, and a misery so inconsiderable, that there shall be but little final difference between some who are acquitted, and others who are condemned. "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." The last admitted, and the first excluded, never let us think that these two classes approach so nearly to equality, that it may be comparatively unimportant with which we ranked. Heaven cannot dwindle away into hell, and hell cannot be softened away into heaven. Happiness or misery—one or other of these must be the portion of every man; and whilst we freely confess that happiness and misery may admit of almost countless degrees, and that thus there may be room for vast variety of retributions, we contend that between the two there must be an untravelled separation: the happiness, or the misery of one may be unspeakably less than that of another; but the least happy, and the least miserable, who shall tell us how much space there is between these for the agony and remorse of a storm-tossed spirit?

Observe then that it must be either of a "resurrection of life," or of a "resurrection of damnation," that each amongst us will be finally partaker. And it is to depend on our works, which of the two shall be our resurrection. "They that have done good," and "they that have done evil," are our Lord's descriptions of the respective classes. Works are given as the alone criterion by which we shall be judged. And this interferes not with the great doctrine of justification by faith, because good works spring from faith, and are both its fruits and its evidence; whilst, by making words the test, a ground is afforded for the judgment of those to whom Christ has not been preached, as well as of those who have been invited to the believing on his name. The whole human family

may be brought to the same bar, seeing that the only thing to be decided, is, whether they have done good, or whether they have done evil.

And what say you to all this? If we could escape the judgment, or if we could bribe the judge; if we had the bone of iron, and the sinew of brass, and the flesh of marble, so that we might defy the fire and the worm, why then we might eat and drink, and amass gold, and gratify lust. But the judgment is not to be escaped—the very dead are to hear the voice, and who then can hide himself? And the Judge is not to be bribed; it is the eternal God himself, whose are the worlds, and all which they contain. And we are sensitive beings, beings with vast capacities for wretchedness, presenting unnumbered inlets to a ministry of vengeance—shall we then, in spite of all this, persist in neglecting the great salvation?

We address ourselves now especially to our younger brethren, desiring to conclude the discourses of the month with a word of exhortation to those on whom "the dew of their youth" is still freshly resting. We have set before you the resurrection of life, and the resurrection of damnation; and we now tell you that you have your fate in your own keeping, and that there is no election but his own through which any one of you can perish. We speak to you as free, accountable beings, each of whom is so circumstanced and assisted that he may, if he will, gain heaven through the merits of Christ. The question therefore is, whether you will act as candidates for eternity, or live as those who know nothing of the great end of their creation. Born for immortality, destined to equality with angels, and entreated to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling," will ye degrade yourselves to the level of the brute, and lose those souls for which Christ died? It is a question which each must answer for himself. Each is free to obey, or flee, youthful lusts, to study, or neglect, God's word, to live without prayer, or to be earnest in supplication. There is no compulsion on any one of you to be vicious; and, be well assured, there will be no compulsion on any one of you to be virtuous. Passions may be strong; but

not too strong to be resisted through that grace which is given to all who seek it, but forced upon none who despise it. Temptations may be powerful; they are never irresistible; he who struggles shall be made victorious; but God delivers none who are not striving to deliver themselves.

Be watchful, therefore—watchful against sins of the flesh, watchful against sins of the mind. Against sins of the flesh—sensuality so debases and enervates, that the soul, as though sepulchred in the body, can do nothing towards vindicating her origin. "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Against sins of the mind—take heed that ye do not so admire and extol reason, as to think lightly of revelation. Ye live in days when mind is on the stretch, and in scenes where there is every thing to call it out. And we do not wish to make you less acute, less inquiring, less intelligent, than the warmest admirers of reason can desire you to become. We only wish you to remember that arrogance is not greatness, and that conceit is the index, not of strength, but of weakness. To exalt reason beyond its due place is to abase it; to set the human in rivalry with the divine is to make it contemptible. Let reason count the stars, weigh the mountains, fathom the depths—the employment becomes her, and the success is glorious. But when the question is, "how shall a man be just with God," reason must be silent, revelation must speak; and he who will not hear it assimilates himself to the first Deist, Cain; he may not kill a brother, he certainly destroys himself.

And that you may be aided in overcoming sin, let your thoughts dwell often on that "strict and solemn account which you must one day give at the judgment-seat of Christ." I have endeavored to speak to you of the general resurrection and the last great assize. To the large mass of you it is not probable that I shall ever speak again. But we shall meet, when the sheeted dead are stirring, and the elements are dissolving. And "knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Would that we could persuade



you. Is there no voice from the "great white throne;" nothing startling in the opened books; no eloquence in the trumpet of the archangel; nothing terrible in the doom, "depart, ye cursed," nothing beautiful in the words, "come, ye blessed?" I cannot plead with you, if insensible to the sublime and thrilling oratory of the judgment scene. If you can go away, and be as dissipated as ever, and as indifferent as ever, now

that ye have beheld the Son of man coming in the clouds, and heard, as it were, your own names in the shrill summons to his bar—what can I say to you? Indeed I feel that there are no more formidable weapons in the moral armory; and I can but pray—for there is yet room for prayer—that God would put sensibility into the stone, and give you feeling enough to feel for yourselves.

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## SERMON.

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### THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL.

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"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."—Hebrews, 6 : 19.

It is a very peculiar and interesting cause which I have this day undertaken to plead—that of the Floating Church, which offers the means of grace to our river population, to the most useful, and well nigh the most neglected of our countrymen—those who are carrying on our commerce, who have fought our battles, and who are ready, if peace be disturbed, to fight them again with equal valor, and, through God's help, with equal success. If there be a call to which the hearts of Englishmen more naturally respond than to any other, it must be that which demands succor for sailors. As a nation we seem to have less fellowship with the land than the sea; and our strongest sympathies are with those who plough its surface, and dare its perils. I feel, therefore, that I never had a charity-sermon to preach, whose subject gave me so powerful a hold on the feelings of a congregation; and I think that this hold will not be lessened, if I engage your attention with a passage of Scripture, in which the imagery, if I

may use the expression, is peculiarly maritime, whilst the truths which are inculcated are of the most interesting kind. The apostle Paul had just been speaking of "laying hold on the hope set before us," by which he seems to denote the appropriation of those various blessings which have all been procured for us by Christ. The hope is that of eternal life; and to lay hold on this hope, must be so to believe upon Christ, that we have share in those sufferings and merits which have purchased forgiveness and immortality for the lost. And when the apostle proceeds, in the words of our text, to describe this hope as an anchor of the soul, we are to understand him as declaring that the expectation of God's favor, and of the glories of heaven, through the atonement and intercession of Christ, is exactly calculated to keep us steadfast and unmoved amid all the tempests of our earthly estate. We shall assume, then, as we are fully warranted by the context in doing, that the hope in question is the hope of sal-

vation, through the finished work of the Mediator. And it will be our chief business to engage you with the metaphorical description which the apostle gives of this hope, and thus aptly to introduce the peculiar claims of the Floating Church. St. Paul likens this hope to an anchor; and then declares of this anchor, or the hope, that it "entereth into that within the veil." Let these be our topics of discourse:

The first, that the christian's hope is as an anchor to his soul.

The second, that this hope, or this anchor, "entereth into that within the veil."

I. Now the idea which is immediately suggested by this metaphor of the anchor is that of our being exposed to great moral peril, tossed on rough waters, and in danger of making shipwreck of our faith. And we must be well aware, if at all acquainted with ourselves and our circumstances, that such idea is in every respect accurate, and that the imagery of a tempest-tossed ship, girt about by the rock and the quicksand, as well as beaten by the hurricane, gives no exaggerated picture of the believer in Christ, as opposition, under various forms, labors at his ruin. We are not, indeed, concerned at present with delineating the progress, but only the steadfastness of the christian; but here, also, the ocean, with its waves and its navies, furnishes the aptest of figures. If there be any principle, or set of principles, which keeps the christian firm and immovable amid the trials and tempests, which, like billows and winds, beat on him furiously, it is evident that we may fairly liken that principle, or that set of principles, to the anchor, which holds the ship fast, whilst the elements are raging, and enables her to ride out in safety the storm. And all, therefore, that is necessary, in order to the vindicating the metaphor of our text is, the showing that the hope of which St. Paul speaks is just calculated for the giving the christian this fixedness, and thus preventing his being driven on the rock, or drawn into the whirlpool.

There are several, and all simple modes, in which it may be shown that such is the property of this hope. We first observe, that there is great risk of our being carried about, as an apostle

expresses it, "with every wind of doctrine;" and whatever, therefore, tends to the keeping us in the right faith, in spite of gusts of error, must deserve to be characterized as an anchor of the soul. But, we may unhesitatingly declare, that there is a power, the very strongest, in the hope of salvation through Christ, of enabling us to stand firm against the incursions of heresy. The man who has this hope will have no ear for doctrines which, in the least degree, depreciate the person or work of the Mediator. You take away from him all that he holds most precious, if you could once shake his belief in the atonement. It is not that he is afraid of examining the grounds of his own confidence; it is, that, having well examined them, and certified himself as to their being irreversible, his confidence has become wound up, as it were, with his being; and it is like assaulting his existence, to assault his hope. The hope pre-supposes faith in the Savior; and faith has reasons for the persuasion that Jesus is God's Son, and "able to save to the uttermost:" and though the individual is ready enough to probe these reasons, and to bring them to any fitting criterion, it is evident, that where faith has once taken possession, and generated hope, he has so direct and overwhelming an interest in holding fast truth, that it must be more than a precious objection, or a well-turned cavil, which will prevail to the loosening of his grasp. And therefore do we affirm of the hope of salvation, that he who has it, is little likely to be carried about with every wind of doctrine. We scarcely dare think that those who are christians only in profession and theory, would retain truth without wavering, if exposed to the machinations of insidious reasoners. They do not feel their everlasting portion so dependent on the doctrine of redemption through the blood and righteousness of a Surety, that, to shake this doctrine, is to make them castaways for eternity; and therefore, neither can they oppose that resistance to assault which will be offered by others who know that it is their immortality they are called to surrender. You may look, then, on an individual, who, apparently unprepared for a vigorous defence of his creed, is yet not to be overborne by the strongest



onset of heresy. And you may think to account for his firmness by resolving it into a kind of obstinacy, which makes him inaccessible to argument; and thus take from his constancy all moral excellence, by representing it as imperviousness to all moral attack. But we have a better explanation to propose; one which does not proceed on the unwarranted assumption, that there must be insensibility where there has not been defeat. We know of the individual, that he has fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him in the Gospel. And you may say of hope, that it is a shadowy and airy thing, not adapted to the keeping man firm; but we assert, on the contrary, of the hope of salvation, that he who has grasped it, feels that he has grasped what is substantial and indestructible; and that henceforward, to wrench away this hope would be like wrenching away the rafter from the drowning man, who knows that, if he loosen his hold, he must perish in the waters. Ay, the hope is too precious to be tamely surrendered. It has animated him too much, and cheered him too much, and sustained him too much, to be given up otherwise than inch by inch—every fraction of the truths on which it rests being disputed for, with that vehemence of purpose which proves the consciousness that with defeat can come nothing but despair. And therefore is it that so little way is made by the teacher of infidelity and error. He is striving to prevail on the individual he attacks, to throw away, as worthless, a treasure which he would not change for whatsoever earth can proffer of the rich and the glorious; and where is the marvel, if he find himself resisted with the determination of one who wrestles for his all? You may liken, then, the believer in Christ to a vessel launched on troubled waters; and you may consider scepticism and false doctrine as the storms which threaten him with shipwreck. And when you express surprise that a bark, which seems so frail, and so poorly equipped against the tempest, should ride out the hurricane, whilst others, a thousand times better furnished with all the resources of intellectual seamanship, drive from their moorings, and perish on the quicksand; we have only to tell you, that it is not

by the strength of reason, and not through the might of mental energy, that moral shipwreck is avoided; but that a hope of salvation will keep the vessel firm when all the cables which man weaves for himself have given way like tow; and that thus, in the wildest of the storms which evil men and evil angels can raise, this hope will verify the apostle's description, that it is an anchor of the soul, and that, too, sure and steadfast.

But there are other respects in which it may be equally shown, that there is a direct tendency in christian hope to the promoting christian steadfastness. We observe, next, that a believer in Christ is in as much danger of being moved by the trials with which he meets, as by attacks upon his faith. But he has a growing consciousness that "all things work together for good," and therefore an increasing submissiveness in the season of tribulation, or an ever-strengthening adherence to God, as to a father. And that which contributes, perhaps more than aught besides, to the producing this adherence, is the hope on which the christian lays hold. If you study the language of David when in trouble, you will find that it was hope by which he was sustained. He describes himself in terms which accurately correspond to the imagery of our text. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." But when the tempest was thus at its height, and every thing seemed to conspire to overwhelm and destroy him, he could yet say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." It is hope, you observe, to which he turns, as the principle through which the soul might best brave the hurricane. And can we wonder that a hope, such as that of the believer in Christ, should so contribute to the steadfastness of its possessor, that the winds may buffet him, and the floods beat against him, and yet he remains firm, like the well-anchored vessel? He knew that, in throwing in his lot with the followers of Jesus, he was consenting to a life of stern moral discipline, and that he

must be prepared for a more than ordinary share of those chastisements from which nature recoils. And why, forewarned as he thus was of what would be met with in a christian course, did he adventure on the profession of a religion that was to multiply his troubles? Why embarked he on an ocean, swept by fiercer winds, and arched with darker skies, when he might have shaped his voyage over less agitated waters? We need not tell you, that he has heard of a bright land, which is only to be reached by launching forth on the boisterous sea. We need not tell you, that he assured himself, upon evidence which admits no dispute, that there is no safety for a vessel freighted with immortality, unless she be tempest-tossed; and that, though there may be a smoother expanse, dotted with islands which seem clad with a richer verdure, and sparkling with a sunshine which is more cheering to the senses of the mariner, yet that it is on the lake, thus sleeping in its beauty, that the ship is in most peril; and that if the lake be changed for the wild broad ocean, then only will a home be reached where no storm rages, and no clouds darken, but where, in one unbroken tranquillity, those who have braved the moral tempest will repose eternally in the light of God's countenance. It is hope, then, by which the christian was animated, when taking his resolve to breast the fury of every adversary, and embrace a religion which told him that in the world he should have tribulation. And when the tribulation comes, and the crested waves are swelling higher and higher, why should you expect him to be driven back, or swallowed up? Is it the loss of property with which he is visited, and which threatens to shake his dependence upon God? Hope whispers that he has in heaven an enduring substance; and he takes joyfully the spoiling of his goods. Is it the loss of friends? He sorrows not "even as others which have no hope," but is comforted by the knowledge, that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Is it sickness—is it the treachery of friends—is it the failure of cherished plans, which hangs the firmament with blackness, and works the waters into fury? None

of these things move him; for hope assures him that his "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Is it death, which, advancing in its awfulness, would beat down his confidence, and snap his cordage, and send him adrift? His hope is a hope full of immortality: he knows "in whom he hath believed, and is persuaded that he is able to keep that which he hath committed unto him against that day." And thus, from whatever point the tempest rages, there is a power in that hope which God hath implanted, of holding fast the christian, and preventing his casting away that confidence which hath great recompense of reward. We can bid you look upon him, when, on every human calculation, so fierce is the hurricane, and so wrought are the waves into madness, there would seem no likelihood of his avoiding the making shipwreck of his faith. And when you find, that, in place of being stranded or engulfed, he resists the wild onset, and, if he do not for the moment advance, keeps the way he has made, oh! then we have an easy answer to give to inquiries as to the causes of this unexpected steadfastness. We do not deny the strength of the storm, and the might of the waters; but we tell you of a hope which grows stronger and stronger as tribulation increases: stronger, because sorrow is the known discipline for the enjoyment of the object of this hope; stronger, because the proved worthlessness of what is earthly serves to fix the affections more firmly on what is heavenly; stronger, inasmuch as there are promises of God, which seem composed on purpose for the season of trouble, and which, then grasped by faith, throw new vigor into hope. And certainly, if we may affirm all this of the hope of a christian, there is no room for wonder that he rides out the hurricane; for such hope is manifestly an anchor of the soul, and that, too, sure and steadfast.

We go on to observe, that the christian is exposed to great varieties of temptation: the passions of an evil nature, and the enticements of a "world which lieth in wickedness," conspire to draw him aside from righteousness,



and force him back to the habits and scenes which he has professedly abandoned. The danger of spiritual shipwreck would be comparatively small, if the sea on which he voyages were swept by no storms but those of sorrow and persecution. The risk is far greater, when he is assaulted by the solicitations of his own lusts, and the corrupt affections of his nature are plied with their correspondent objects. And though it too often happens that he is overcome by temptation, we are sure, that, if he kept hope in exercise, he would not be moved by the pleadings of the flesh and the world. Let hope be in vigor, and the christian's mind is fixed on a portion which he can neither measure by his imagination, nor be deprived of by his enemies. He is already in a city which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon; whose walls are of jasper, and whose streets are of gold. Already he joins the general assembly and church of the first-born—already is he the equal of angels—already is he advancing with a shining company, which no man can number, towards the throne of God and of the Lamb, and beholding face to face the Creator and Redeemer, and bursting into an ecstasy of adoration, as the magnificence of Deity is more and more developed. And now, if, at a time such as this,—when it may almost be said that he has entered the haven, that he breathes the fragrance, and gazes on the loveliness, and shares the delights of the Paradise of God,—he be solicited to the indulgence of a lust, the sacrifice of a principle, or the pursuit of a bauble,—can you think the likelihood to be great that he will be mastered by the temptation, that he will return, at the summons of some low passion, from his splendid excursion, and defile himself with the impurities of earth? Oh! we can be confident—and the truth is so evident as not to need proof—that, in proportion as a man is anticipating the pleasures of eternity, he will be firm in his resolve of abstaining from the pleasures of sin. We can be confident, that if hope, the hope set before us in the Gospel, be earnestly clung to, there will be no room in the grasp for the glittering toys with which Satan would bribe us to throw away our eternity.

And therefore,—to bring the matter again under the figure of our text,—we can declare of hope, that it ministers to christian steadfastness, when the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, combine to produce wavering and inconstancy. Again we liken the christian to a ship, and the temptations by which he is met to a tempest, which threatens to drive him back, and cast him a wreck upon the shore. And it would avail nothing that he was furnished with the anchors, if such they may be called, of a philosophic love of virtue, of a feeling that vice is degrading to man, and of a general opinion that God may possibly approve self-denial. If these held the ship at first, they would quickly give way, when the storm of evil passion grew towards its height. But hope—the hope of a heaven into which shall enter nothing that defileth; the hope of joys as pure as they are lofty, and as spiritual as they are abiding; the hope of what the eye hath not seen, and the ear hath not heard, but which can be neither attained nor enjoyed without holiness—this hope, we say, is a christian's sheet-anchor in the hurricane of temptation; and if he use this hope, in his endeavors to bear up against the elements, he shall, by God's help, weather the worst moral storm; and then, when the sky is again bright, and the mighty billows have subsided, and the vessel again spreads her canvass, oh! he shall gratefully and rejoicingly confess of this hope, that it is an anchor of the soul, and that, too, sure and steadfast.

II. Now, throughout these illustrations we have rather assumed than proved that christian hope is of a nature widely different from that of any other. But it will be easily seen that we have claimed for it nothing beyond the truth, if we examine, in the second place, the apostle's statement in regard of a christian's hope, that it "entereth into that within the veil." The allusion is undoubtedly to the veil, or curtain, which separated the holy place from the holy of holies in the temple at Jerusalem. By the holy of holies was typified the scene of God's immediate presence, into which Christ entered when the days of his humiliation were ended. And hence we understand by the hope, or the anchor, entering

within the veil, that, in believing upon Jesus, we fasten ourselves, as it were, to the realities of the invisible world. This throws new and great light on the simile of our text. It appears that the christian, whilst tossing on a tempestuous sea, is fast bound to another scene of being; and that, whilst the vessel is on the waters of time, the anchor is on the rock of eternity. And it is not possible that the soul should find safe anchorage without the veil. Conscientious as she is, and often forced to allow scope to the consciousness, that she is not to perish with the body, she may strive, indeed, to attach herself firmly to terrestrial things; but an overgrown restlessness will prove that she has cast her anchor where it cannot gain a hold. If we were merely intellectual beings, and not also immortal, the case might be different. There might be an anchor of the mind, which entered not into that within the veil, of strength enough, and tenacity enough, to produce steadfastness amid the fluctuations of life. But immortal as we are, as well as intellectual, the anchor of the soul must be dropped in the waters of the boundless hereafter. And when, after vain efforts to preserve herself from wreck and disquietude, by fixing her hope on things which perish with the using, she is taught of God to make heaven and its glories the object of expectation, then it is as though she had let down her anchor to the very base of the everlasting hills, and a mighty hold is gained, and the worst tempest may be defied. The soul which is thus anchored in eternity, is like the vessel which a stanch cable binds to the distant shore and which gradually warps itself into harbor. There is at once what will keep her steadfast in the storm, and advance her towards the haven. Who knows not that the dissatisfaction which men always experience whilst engaged in the pursuit of earthly good, arises mainly from a vast disproportion between their capacities for happiness, and that material of happiness with which they think to fill them? What they hope for is some good, respecting which they might be certain, that, if attained, it will only disappoint. And therefore is it, that in place of being as an anchor, hope itself agitates

them, driving them hither and thither, like ships without ballast. But it is not thus with a hope which entereth within the veil. Within the veil are laid up joys and possessions which are more than commensurate with men's capacities for happiness, when stretched to the utmost. Within the veil is a glory, such as was never proposed by ambition in its most daring flight; and a wealth, such as never passed before avarice in its most golden dreams; and delights, such as imagination, when employed in delineating the most exquisite pleasures, hath never been able to array. And let hope fasten on this glory, this wealth, these delights, and presently the soul, as though she felt that the objects of desire were as ample as herself, acquires a fixedness of purpose, a steadiness of aim, a combination of energies, which contrast strangely with the inconstancy, the vacillation, the distraction, which have made her hitherto the sport of every wind and every wave. The object of hope being immeasurable, inexhaustible, hope clings to this object with a tenacity which it cannot manifest when grasping only the insignificant and unsubstantial; and thus the soul is bound, we might almost say indissolubly, to the unchangeable realities of the inheritance of the saints. And can you marvel, if, with her anchor thus dropped within the veil, she is not to be driven from her course by the wildest of the storms which yet rage without? Besides, within the veil is an Intercessor, whose pleadings insure that these objects of hope shall be finally attained. There is something exquisitely beautiful in the idea, that the anchor has not been dropped in the rough waters which the christian has to navigate. The anchor rests where there is one eternal calm, and its hold is on a rock, which no action of the waves can wear down. You may say of christian hope, that it is a principle which gives fixedness to the soul, because it can appeal to an ever-living, ever-prevalent Intercessor, who is pledged to make good its amplest expectations. It is the hope of joys which have been purchased at a cost which it is not possible to compute, and which are delivered into a guardianship which it is not possible to defeat. It is the hope



of an inheritance, our title to which has been written in the blood of the Mediator, and our entrance into which that Mediator ever lives to secure. And therefore is it that we affirm of christian hope, that it is precisely adapted to the preventing the soul from being borne away by the gusts of temptation, or swallowed up in the deep waters of trial. It is more than hope. It is hope with all its attractiveness, and with none of its uncertainty. It is hope with all that beauty and brilliancy by which men are fascinated, and with none of that delusiveness by which they are deceived. It is hope, with its bland and soothing voice, but that voice whispering nothing but truth; hope, with its untired wing, but that wing lifting only to regions which have actual existence; hope, with its fairy pencil, but that pencil painting only what really flashes with the gold and vermilion. Oh, if hope be fixed upon Christ, that Rock of Ages,—a rock rent, if we may use the expression, on purpose that there might be a holding-place for the anchors of a perishing world—it may well come to pass that hope gives the soul steadfastness. I know that within the veil there ever reigneth one who obtained right, by his agony and passion, to rear eternal mansions for those who believe upon his name. I know that within the veil there are not only pleasures and possessions adequate to the capacities of my nature, when advanced to full manhood, but a friend, a surety, an advocate, who cannot be prevailed with, even by unworthiness, to refuse me a share in what he died to procure, and lives to bestow. And therefore, if I fix my hope within the veil; within the veil, where are the alone delights that can satisfy; within the veil, where is Christ, whose intercession can never be in vain,—hope will be such as is neither to be diverted by passing attractions, nor daunted by apprehensions of failure: it will, consequently, keep me firm alike amid the storm of evil passions, and the inrush of Satan's suggestions; it will enable me equally to withstand the current which would hurry me into disobedience, and the eddies which would sink me into despondency. And, oh, then, is it not with justice that I declare of hope,

that "it is an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast;" and that I give as the reason, that "it entereth into that within the veil!"

And now we may safely ask, whether, if you know any thing practically of the worth of christian hope, you can be indifferent to the condition of thousands around you, who have no such anchor of the soul? If you are anchored within the veil, can you look on with unconcern, whilst many a noble bark, on the right hand and on the left, freighted with immortality, is drifting to and fro, the sport of every wind, and in danger, each instant, of being wrecked for eternity? We are sure that christian privileges are of so generous and communicative a nature, that no man can possess, and not wish to impart them. And if there be a class of individuals who, on all accounts, have a more than common claim on the sympathy of christians, because more than commonly exposed to moral tempests and dangers, may we not select sailors as that class,—men whose business is in great waters, who from boyhood have been at home on the sea, whether in storm or in calm; but whose opportunities of christian instruction are, for the most part, wretchedly small; and who learn to steer to every harbor except that which lieth within the veil? The religious public have much to answer for on account of the neglect—of course we speak comparatively—which they have manifested towards sailors. Very little has even yet been done towards ameliorating their moral condition. So soon as the sailor returns to port, after having been long tossed on distant seas, he is surrounded by miscreants, who seek to entice him to scenes of the worst profligacy, that they may possess themselves of his hard-earned gains. And christian philanthropy has been very slow in stepping in and offering an asylum to the sailor, where he may be secure against the villany which would ruin body and soul. Christian philanthropy has been very slow in taking measures for providing, that, when he returned from his wanderings—probably to find many in the grave who had sent anxious thoughts after him as he ploughed the great deep, and who had vainly hoped

to welcome him back—he should have the Gospel preached to him, and the ministers of christianity to counsel, and admonish, and encourage him. It is vain to say, that our churches have been open, and that the sailor, as well as the landsman, might enter, and hear the glad tidings of redemption. You are to remember, that for months, and perhaps even years, the sailor has been debarred from the means of grace; he has been in strange climes, where he has seen nothing but idolatry; even the forms of religion have been altogether kept from him; and now he requires to be sought out, and entreated; and unless in some peculiar mode, you bring the Gospel to him, the likelihood is the very smallest of his seeking it for himself. But we thank God that of late years attempts have been made, so far as the port of this great city is concerned, to provide christian instruction for sailors. There is now a Floating Church in our river: a vessel, which had been built for the battle, and which walked the waters to pour its thunders on the enemies of our land, has, through the kindness of government, been converted into a place of worship; and a flag waves from it, telling the mariner that, on the element which he has made his own, he may learn how to cast anchor for eternity; and the minister of this church moves about among the swarming ships, as he would move through his parish, endeavoring by the use of all the engines by which God has intrusted his ambassadors, to arrest vice, and gain a hold for religion amongst the wild and weather-beaten crews. And it is in support of this church that we now ask your contributions. His Majesty the King, by the liberal annual subscription of £50, shows how warm an interest he takes in the cause, and recommends it to the succor of his subjects. The exemplary bishop, moreover, of this diocese—whom may a gracious God soon restore to full health—is deeply interested on behalf of this church. But you cannot need to be told of the great and the noble who support this cause; it asks not the recommendation of titled patronage; you are Englishmen, and the church is for sailors. Yes, the church is for sailors; men who have bled for us, men who fetch for us all

the productions of the earth, men who carry out to every land the Bibles we translate, and the missionaries we equip: the church is for sailors; and yet though the annual expenditure is only between three and four hundred pounds, the stated annual income—I am almost ashamed to say it—is only a hundred and fifty. I am persuaded, that to mention this will suffice to procure a very liberal collection. I cannot bring myself to attempt the working on your feelings. When I plead the cause of sailors, it seems to me as though the hurricane and the battle, the ocean with its crested billows, and war with its magnificently stern retinue, met and mingled to give force to the appeal. It seems as though stranded navies, the thousands who have gone down with the waves for their winding-sheet, and who await in unfathomable caverns the shrill trumpet-peal of the archangel, rose to admonish us of the vast debt we owe those brave fellows who are continually jeoparding their lives in our service. And then there comes also before me the imagery of a mother, who has parted, with many tears and many forebodings, from her sailor-boy; whose thoughts have accompanied him as none but those of a mother can, in his long wanderings over the deep, and who would rejoice, with all a mother's gladness, to know that where his moral danger was greatest, there was a church to receive him, and a minister to counsel him. But we shall not enlarge on such topics. We only throw out hints, believing that this is enough to waken thoughts in your minds, which will not allow of your contenting yourselves with such contributions as are the ordinary produce of charity-sermons. The great glory of England, and her great defence, have long lain, under the blessing of God, in what we emphatically call her wooden walls. And if we could make vital christianity general amongst our sailors, we should have done more than can be calculated towards giving permanence to our national greatness, and bringing onward the destruction of heathenism. We say advisedly, the destruction of heathenism. The influence is not to be computed which English sailors now exert for evil all over the globe. They are



scattered all over the globe; but too often, though far from always, unhappily, their dissoluteness brings discredit on the christian religion, and pagans learn to ridicule the faith which seems prolific of nothing but vice. Our grand labor therefore should be to teach our sailors to cast anchor within the veil; and then in all their voyages would they serve as missionaries, and not a ship would leave our coasts which was not freighted with preachers of redemption; and wheresoever the British flag flies, and that is wheresoever the sea beats, would the standard of the cross be displayed. Ay, man our wooden walls with men who have

taken christian hope as the anchor of the soul; and these walls shall be as ramparts which no enemies can overthrow, and as batteries for the demolition of the strongholds of Satan. Then,—and may God hasten the time, and may you now prove your desire for its coming—then will the navy of England be every where irresistible, because every where voyaging in the strength and service of the Lord; and the noble words of poetry shall be true in a higher sense than could ever yet be affirmed:

“Britannia needs no bulwark,  
 “No towers along the steep;  
 “Her march is on the mountain-wave,  
 “Her home is on the deep!”

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## SERMON.

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### THE DIVINE PATIENCE EXHAUSTED THROUGH THE MAKING VOID THE LAW.

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“It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.”—Psalms 119: 126, 127.

There is no property of the divine nature which demands more, whether of our admiration or of our gratitude, than long-suffering. That the Lord is “slow to anger”—there is more in this to excite both wonder and praise, than in those other truths with which it is associated by the prophet Nahum. “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.” We have often told you that the long-suffering of God is wonderful, because it indicates the putting constraint on his own attributes; it is omnipotence exerted over the Omnipotent himself.

So far as our own interests are concerned, you will readily admit that we are extraordinarily indebted to the Di-

vine forbearance. Those of us who are now walking the path of life, where would they have been, had not God borne long with them, refusing, as it were, to be wearied out by their perversity? Those who are yet “strangers from the covenant of promise,” to what but the patience of their Maker is it owing, that they have not been cut down as cumberers of the ground, but still stand within the possibilities of forgiveness and acceptance? But it is a melancholy thing that we are compelled to add, that there is a great tendency in all of us to the abusing God’s long-suffering, and to the so presuming on his forbearance as to continue in sin. We may be sure that a vast outward reformation would be wrought on the world, if there were a sudden change in God’s dealings, so that pun-

ishment followed instantaneously on crime. If the Almighty were to mark out certain offences, the perpetration of which he would immediately visit with death, there can be no doubt that these offences would be shunned with the greatest carefulness, and that too by the very men whom no exhortations, and no warnings, can now deter from their commission. Yet it is not that punishment is one jot less certain now than it would be on the supposed change of arrangement. The only difference is, that, in one case, God displays long-suffering, and that in the other he would not display long-suffering—the certainty that punishment will follow crime is quite the same in both. And thus, unhappily, sin is less avoided than it would be if we lived under an economy of immediate retribution; and “because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” In place of being softened by the patience of which we have so long been the objects, we are apt to be encouraged by it to further resistance; calculating that he who has so often forbore to strike, will spare a little longer, and that we may with safety yet defer to repent.

It is, therefore, of great importance that men be taught that there are limits even to the forbearance of God, and that it is possible so to presume on it as to exhaust. And this is evidently what the Psalmist inculcates in the first of those verses on which we would discourse. He seems to mark the times in which he lived as times of extraordinary depravity, when men had thrown off the restraints of religion. “They have made void thy law.” They have reduced the divine precepts to a dead letter, and refuse to receive them as a rule of life. The expression manifestly denotes that a more than common contempt was put on the commandments of God, and that men had reached a rare point of insolence and disobedience. And it is further manifest, that, when wickedness was thus at its height, David expected that there would be an end of the forbearance of God, and that he would at length give scope to his righteous indignation. “It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law.” As much as

to say, men have now exceeded the bounds prescribed to long-suffering; they have outrun the limits of grace; and now, therefore, God must interfere, vindicate his own honor, and repress the swellings of unrighteousness.

This, then, is the first truth presented by our text,—that it is possible to go so far in disobedience that it will be necessary for God to interpose in vengeance, and visibly withstand men’s impiety. But what effect will be produced on a truly righteous man by this extraordinary prevalence of iniquity? Will he be carried away by the current of evil? Will he be tempted, by the universal scorn which he sees thrown on God’s law, to think slightly of it himself, and give it less of his reverence and attachment? On the contrary, this law becomes more precious in David’s sight, in proportion as he felt that it was so despised and set aside, that the time for God to work had arrived. You observe that the verses are connected by the word “therefore.” “They have made void thy law.” What then? Is that law less esteemed and less prized by myself? Quite the reverse; “they have made void thy law; therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.” There is much that deserves our closest attention in this connection between the verses. It is a high point of holiness which that man has reached, whose love of God’s commandments grows with the contempt which all around him put on these commandments. This, then, is the second truth presented by our text,—that there is greater reason than ever for our prizing God’s law, if the times should be those in which that law is made void. So that there are two great principles which must successively engage our attention in meditating on the words which form our subject of address. The first is, that there is a point in human iniquity at which it is necessary that God should interfere; the second, that, when this point is reached, the righteous are more than ever bound to prize and love the law of the Lord. It will be our endeavor to set these principles clearly before you, and to examine them in their several bearings and results.

Now, in one of those visions which



God vouchsafed to the patriarch Abraham, the land of Canaan was promised to his posterity, but a distant time fixed for their taking possession. The reason given why centuries must elapse ere they could enter on the inheritance, is every way remarkable. "In the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not full." We may understand the Amorites to be put here generally for the inhabitants of Canaan, whose iniquities were gradually bringing on their expulsion and extermination. And though even these inhabitants might have been conspicuous in idolatry and impiety, they had not, it appears, yet reached that measure of guiltiness which was to mark them out for vengeance. "The iniquity of the Amorites," saith God, "is not yet full; and, therefore, I cannot yet give command for their destruction,—nay, it will not be until the fourth generation that I can dispossess them to make room for my people." It is evident, from this instance, that in the exercise of his long-suffering, God allows nations a certain period of probation, but that there is a point up to which, if they accumulate iniquity, they can expect nothing but an outbreak of indignation and punishment. It was not yet time for God to work, inasmuch as the Amorites, though disobedient to his law, had not yet gone the length of making it void. But that time would arrive. The Amorites would advance from one degree of sinfulness to another, and the children would but add to the burden of misdoing entailed on them by profligate fathers. Then would be the time for God to work; and then would the Almighty arise in his fury, and prove, by the vehemence of his dealings, that though slow to anger, he will not finally acquit the wicked. We need not remind you how fearfully this truth was exemplified in the instance of the Amorites. The terrible judgments at length inflicted through the instrumentality of the Israelites are known to all, and show clearly that punishment is not the less sure because long delayed.

You have the same truth depicted in the case of the Jews. You find Christ, in one of these tremendous denunciations, which are the more awful,

because found on the lips of him, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again," declaring that the blood of all the prophets which had been shed from the foundation of the world, should be required of the nation he addressed. The representation is here the same as in the instance of the Amorites. The Jews had been long borne with; and God, though often provoked by their impieties to inflict lesser punishments, had not yet gone the length of casting them off as a nation. But their wickedness was not forgotten nor overlooked, because yet unvisited with the extreme of indignation. Each century of profligacy had only treasured up wrath; and Christ bids the abandoned of his own day fill up the measure of their fathers, that it might at last be time for God to work. And when the time came, and the iniquity was full, then it appeared that it is a tremendous thing to have worn out divine patience; for wrath fell so signally and so fiercely on the Jews, that their miseries exceeded those which their ancestors had dealt to the Amorites.

These instances—and it were easy to adduce more—sufficiently prove that God keeps what we may call a reckoning with nations, and that there is a sum total of guilt—though it be out of our power to define the amount—which he allows not to be passed; but which, when reached, draws down upon the land the long-deferred vengeance. We say that it is out of our power to define the amount, for we know not precisely that point in iniquity at which it may be said that God's law is made void. But it is comparatively unimportant that we ascertain the exact amount of guilt which becomes such a mill-stone round the neck of a people, that they are dragged into the depths of disaster and wretchedness. It is sufficient to know that God takes account of what is done on the earth, and that he charges on one generation the crimes of a preceding. It is enough for all practical purposes, that we can prove there are limits to the forbearance of the Almighty; and that consequently it is either ignorance or insanity which would count on impunity, because there is delay. We say that this is enough; for this should make every true lover of his country eager

to diminish the sum-total of national guiltiness. It matters nothing whether we can tell, in any given instance, by how many fractions the sum is yet below that amount at which it must be met by commensurate vengeance. The grand thing is, that we ascertain a principle in the Divine dealings, the principle that there is a register kept of the impieties of a land, and that, too, with the unerring accuracy of the Omniscient; and that though, as the figures go on rapidly accumulating, God may bear with the land, and ply it with calls to repentance and overtures of forgiveness, yet when those figures present a certain array, they serve as a signal to the ministry of wrath, and mark that there are no sands left in the glass of Divine patience. And when we have determined this principle, how clear, how imperative, the duty of laboring to strike off some figures, and thus to gain further respite for a country whose register may be fast approaching the fatal amount. We know of a land for which God hath done more than for any other on which the sun shines, as he makes the circuit of the globe. It is a land which hath been marvellously preserved from the incursions of enemies; and whose valleys, whilst the rest of the earth was turned into one vast battle-plain, never echoed with the tocsin of war. It is a land which, though inconsiderable in itself, has been raised to a greatness unequalled among nations, whose fame is on every shore, whose fleets on every sea, and whose resources have seemed so to grow with the demand, that every trial has but developed the unsuspected strength. And it is little that this land, by prowess in arms, and wisdom in debate, has won itself a name of the mightiest renown, subdued kingdoms, planted colonies, and gathered into its harbors the commerce of the world. We know yet greater things of this land. We know that Christianity, in all its purity, is publicly taught as the religion of the land; that in its churches is proclaimed the life-giving doctrine of the "one Mediator between God and man;" and that its civil institutions have all that beauty, and all that expansiveness, which nothing but the Gospel of Christ was ever yet able to produce or preserve. But we have our fears—oh, more than

our fears,—regard of this land, that, whilst it has thus been the recipient of unrivalled mercies, whilst Providence has watched over it, and shielded it, and poured upon it all that was choicest in the treasure-house of heaven, there have been an ingratitude, and a contempt of the Benefactor, and a growing distaste for religion, and a pride, and a covetousness, and a luxury, which have written many and large figures in the register which God keeps of nations; so that, though the land is still borne with, yea, abundantly blessed, it has made vast approaches towards that fulness of iniquity which the Amorite reached, and which the Israelites reached, but reached only to perish. God forbid that we should say of the land to which we have referred, whatever its sins, that as yet it hath made void the law of its Maker. We hope that there is yet such vigor in its piety as will give fixedness to what is venerable and precious in its institutions. But we are sure that with the purity of its christianity must stand or fall the majesty of its empire. We are sure that it is, as the home of protestantism, the centre of truth; that God hath honored and upheld the land of which we speak; and that the rapid way of multiplying the figures, which may already be portentous in its account, would be the surrendering its protestantism, and the giving, in any way, countenance to popery. Oh, if it could ever come to pass, that, acting on the principle of a short-sighted policy, the rulers of the land in question should restore his lost ascendancy to the man of sin, and take under the care and protection of the state that religion which prophecy has unequivocally denounced, and in writing against which a pious ancestry met death in its most terrible shapes; then, indeed, may we think, the measure of the guilt would be full; then, in the national apostacy might be read the advance of national ruin—yea then, we believe—the protest of a witness for truth being no longer given—there would be heard a voice, issuing from the graves of martyrs and confessors with which the land is covered, and from the souls which St. John saw beneath the altar when the fifth seal was opened, "that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony



which they held;" and these would be the words which the voice would utter: "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law."

But we do not suppose that these words should be interpreted with reference only to that point in national guilt at which God is moved to interfere in vengeance. Vengeance is one way in which God works; but it is a way of which we may declare, that it is forced upon God, and not resorted to without the greatest reluctance. We find these expressions in the prophecies of Isaiah: "The Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act." You observe, the work of wrath is a strange work, and the act of punishment is a strange act. God strikes, but the striking might almost be declared foreign to his nature; it is necessary for the vindication of his attributes, but can hardly be said to be congenial with them. There is much in this to encourage the penitent, but not the presumptuous. God may be loth to punish, but nevertheless he will punish; and I am only impressed with a greater sense of the tremendousness of divine wrath, when I find that the bringing it into act is an effort even to the Omnipotent. How weighty must that be which God himself has difficulty in raising!

There are, however, other ways in which God works, when moved by the making void of his law. It is curious and interesting to observe how God, from the first, has been mindful of what passes on the earth, and how he has interposed just when a crisis has demanded the interposition. When our first parents fell, his law was emphatically made void; and then there appearing no alternative to the destruction of our race, it was time for God to work; the exigence could be met by nothing but a divine interference, and God graciously worked as a deliverer. And afterwards the notices of traditional religion were soon so obscured and weakened, that there was danger of all remembrance of its Maker perishing from the globe. The law was so made void, and wickedness had reached such a

height, that it was time for God to work in vengeance; and accordingly he brought a flood upon the earth, and swept away thousands of the ungodly. But whilst working in vengeance, he worked also in mercy, and, saving Noah and his family, provided that the world should be re-peopled, and that there should be myriads for his Son to redeem. And then, if he had left the earth to itself, it would have been quickly overspread with idolatry, and all flesh have become corrupt as it was before the flood. But here again it was time for God to work, and he set apart one family for himself, and through its instrumentality preserved mankind from total degeneracy, until the period of the incarnation arrived. It may be affirmed also, that this period was one at which the necessity for divine interference had become strongly marked. We learn from St. Paul, that, "after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." So that it appears that, through successive centuries of heathenism, there had been carried on an experiment, not for the satisfaction of God, who knows the end from the beginning, but for the conviction of men who are prone to magnify their powers; and that the object of this experiment had been the ascertaining whether, by its own wisdom, the world could acquire a sound knowledge of its Maker. And the apostle declares that, when Christ came, the experiment had been fully made, and that its result was completely against the boasted strength of reason. So that here again it was time for God to work. Reason had proved itself quite incompetent to the producing right notions of God, and therefore a just estimate of his law; and now, then, the law being altogether made void, it was time for God to work through a new revelation of himself. And certainly you can have little difficulty in determining for yourselves, that, in regard of the christian church, God has acted on the principle laid down in our text. How often has he allowed matters to come, as it were, to an extremity, in order that there might be a clear need of his interference, and then has he arisen mightily to the succor of

the perishing. In earlier days he permitted persecution to make great havoc with the church, so that Satan seemed often on the point of effecting the extirpation of christianity. But it was soon found that a season of depression ushered in one of triumph, and that the church was brought low, that she might be more signally exalted. And when we survey christianity, in its first struggles with heathenism, reduced often to so languid a condition that there seemed nothing to be looked for but its total extinction, and then suddenly rising in greater brilliancy and purity, we can only say that God thereby proved that he reserves his gracious interpositions for exigencies when their necessity cannot be denied, and that he acts on the principle, that, when men make void his law, then it is time for him to work.

Neither is there any cause for surprise that such should be a principle in the divine dispensations. You must own that when, on all human calculations, the case is desperate, the interference of God will be more distinctly recognized, and the likelihood is less of his being robbed of the honor due unto his name. Hence it might be expected that God would choose those times for interposition at which it was most evident that no power but a divine could suffice, in order to counteract that proneness, of which the best must be conscious, to ascribe to second causes what should be referred only to the first. We may add to this, that, in the hour of the church's depression and danger, there will be more fervent prayer on her behalf from the yet faithful remnant; and we know that God delights to answer the earnest supplications of his people. And it is under this point of view that our text should encourage us, as much as it alarms others. We have shown you that there is an amount of guiltiness, defined by the making void of God's law, which provokes the Almighty to come forth as an avenger. But we now show you that it is not only as an avenger, but equally as a protector, that God appears in days when his law is made void upon earth. These are days when the righteous will be stirred by the abounding of iniquity to greater diligence in prayer;

and God has promised that he will "avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them." You see, then, what your duty is, if your lot be cast in times when there seems danger that truth will be overborne by falsehood. Our text instructs you as to the form into which to shape your petitions. We have spoken already of a land over which, as the depository of the pure religion of Christ, has been spread for long years the shield of divine favor. We have spoken of the desperate jeopardy in which that land would be placed, if its legislature should so abjure the principles of protestantism as to give countenance and support to the Roman apostacy. It would be time for God to work in indignation and vengeance, if a people, whom he hath marvellously delivered from the bondage of popery, and whom he strengthened to throw off a yoke which had kept down their immortality, should give vigor, by any national act, to the corrupt faith of Rome, and thus reanimate the tyranny which waits but a touch, and it will start again into despotism. But we know what would be the business of all the righteous in that land, if they saw signs of the approach of such peril. We know that it would not become them to sit in calm expectation of the ruin, comforting themselves with the belief that God would shelter his own people in the day of indignation. It would be their business to recall the memory of former deliverances, and to bear in mind how God has always chosen extremities when there seemed least hope that ruin would be averted, for the manifestations of his care over his church. It would be their business to remember, and to act on the remembrance, that the time for God, in every sense, to work, is the time at which men are making void his law. And we have a confidence in "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," which forbids our despairing of any land, within whose confines are yet found the believing and prayerful. If the presence of ten righteous would have turned away the fire and brimstone from the guilty cities of the plain, we shall not reckon the doom of any country sealed, so long as we know that it is not des-



titute of the leaven of godliness, but that there are among its inhabitants who view, in a season of danger, a season when they may go, with special confidence, to the mercy-seat, and plead, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work." The hearts of statesmen are in the hands of God, and the passions of the turbulent and disaffected are under his governance, and the designs of the enemies of his church are all subject to his over-ruling providence; and prayer moves the arm which marshals stars, and calms the great deep, and directs the motions of disordered wills. Why, then, should we despair for a land, unless assured that patriotism has become dissociated from righteousness, and that they, whose privilege it is to have access to the Father through the Mediator, Christ, and to whom the promise has been made by the Savior, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," have so far turned traitors as to remember not their country in their petitions? If, indeed, in the land of which we have spoken, a protestant government were so to sacrifice every principle which enters into its constitution, as to make provision for the propagation of papal falsehood and delusion, we might justly fear that the time for intercession had passed, and that God must hearken to the voice pealing forth from the sepulchres of martyred thousands, and from the souls beneath the altar, telling him the time was come for him to work as an avenger. But so long, at least, as the land held fast its protestantism, and there was only the threatening of its being surrendered, we should feel that a vast responsibility was laid upon the men of prayer, and upon the women of prayer, throughout that land. Ay, and we should hope that the days of its happiness and its greatness were not numbered, and that measures, fraught with its desolation, because involving the compromise of its christianity, would never be permitted to be enacted and enforced, if we knew that these men and these women were urgent in the business of supplication, and that from beneath every roof which gave shelter to God-fearing individuals, in the city, in the village, on the mountain, in the valley, was issuing the cry, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work as

a Protector, for they are making void thy law."

Now we are so pressed by the remainder of our great subject of discourse, that we are compelled to pass by much on which we wish to enlarge. It is evident that the portion of our text, on which we have hitherto spoken, admits of an individual, as well as a national, application. We might speak to you of limits to the divine forbearance, when any one amongst ourselves is regarded as the object of its exercise; and show you, consequently, the madness of our presuming on long-suffering, as though it could not be exhausted. We might enlarge also on the personal encouragement which the text gives to those who put trust in God; inasmuch as we perceive that the being brought into circumstances of unusual danger and distress, in place of causing despondency, should give occasion for greater hope, the hour of special tribulation being ordinarily chosen by God as the hour of his choicest manifestations.

We must, however, refer these considerations to your private meditations, though it will be evident to those who trace carefully the connection of the several parts of our discourse, that they enter, in a degree, into what has yet to be advanced.

The second great truth presented by our text, and which we have now to examine, is that, when the point in iniquity is reached at which God's interference becomes necessary, the righteous are more than ever bound to prize and love the law of the Lord. We derive this truth, as we have before said, from the connection between the verses. When David has declared that it is time for God to work, since the law was made void, he adds, "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold,"—clearly implying, that the contempt put on God's law was an additional motive to his giving that law his esteem and affection. And it is of great importance we determine on what principles David proceeded in making this decision, or what reasons were on his side when he valued the commandments, because made void by others. It cannot be denied, as we have already intimated, that it is a high point in holiness which

the Psalmist is hereby proved to have reached. We must own, in respect of ourselves, that we find it hard to confess Christ, and declare ourselves his followers, in the face of a vehement and growing opposition.

In sketching the characteristics and occurrences which should mark the approach of the second advent, the Savior uttered this prediction. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." He knew what a paralyzing and deadening influence would be exerted over piety by multiplied wickedness, and how sickly and dwarfish, for the most part, would christianity become, when the soil and the atmosphere were saturated with unrighteousness. And the event has but too faithfully borne out the prediction. It is at all times difficult to hold fast the christian profession. But the difficulty is a hundred-fold augmented, when it must be held fast with few or none to keep us in countenance, and when to dare to be religious is to dare the opposition of a neighborhood. And it is but too possible that much of the christianity which passes muster in our own day, and wins itself a reputation for soundness and stanchness, is indebted for its very existence to the absence of persecution; and that, if there came days in which God's law was made void, and the church was sifted by fiery trial, a great proportion of what appears genuine and steadfast would prove its hollowness by defection, in place of being strengthened and confirmed by opposition:

But however this be, we may declare of the truly religious, that they have increased cause for prizing and adhering to God's law, if the days in which they live be days in which iniquity is more than ordinarily prevalent. It is too obvious, in the first place, to be overlooked, that, in days such as these, there is the very finest opportunity of giving honor to God. To love his commandments above gold, whilst others count them but dross, is to display a noble zeal for his glory, and to appear as the champions of his cause, when that cause is on the point of being universally deserted. The promise moreover runs, "Them that honor me, I will honor;" and the season, therefore, in which the greatest honor may be

given to God, is that also in which the most of future glory may be secured by the righteous. What then, the Psalmist seems to ask—would you have me less fervent in attachment to God's law, because the making void of that law has rendered it a time for God to work? What, shall I choose that moment for turning traitor when God will be most glorified, and myself most advantaged, by loyalty? What, relax in devotedness, just when, by maintaining my allegiance, I may bear the noblest testimony, and gain the highest recompense? Oh, where the heart has been given to God, and fixed on the glories of heaven, there should be a feeling that days, in which religion is most decried and derided, are days in which zeal should be warmest, and profession most unflinching. To adhere boldly to the cause of righteousness, when almost solitary in adherence, is to fight the battle when champions are most needed, and when therefore victory will be most triumphant. Let then, saith the Psalmist, the times be times of universal defection from godliness—I will gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, loyalty from their treason. Indeed, as I gaze on what is passing around me, I cannot but observe that thy law, O God, is made void, and that it is therefore time for thee to work. But I am not on this account shaken in attachment to thy service. On the contrary, thy law seems to me more precious than ever, for in now keeping thy commandments I can give thee greater glory, and find greater reward. What then? it may be that they have made void thy law; but from my heart I can say, "Therefore, on that very account, I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold."

It may be said, however, that though we thus give a reason why David should have been more earnest in holding fast his profession, we scarcely touch the point why the commandments themselves should have been more precious in his sight. But it is not difficult to explain the connection between the verses, even if it be simply the love of God's law which we suppose increased by the prevalence of impiety. We know, beyond all peradventure, that the only remedy for the multiplied dis-



orders of this creation is to be found in conformity to the revealed will of God. We are sure, whatever schemes may be devised for the amelioration of human condition, that the happiness of a people is closely bound up with its righteousness, and that the greater the departure from God the greater the misery introduced into its families. It is no unwarranted assertion, but one which will stand every test to which it can fairly be brought, that the decline of a nation's prosperity keeps pace with the decline of its piety, and that in banishing true religion you banish the chief elements of its greatness and security.

And what is the condition of a land, when its inhabitants have literally made void God's law? The experiment was tried in the heart of civilized Europe; and we all know what fearful scenes were enacted on the stage of revolutionized France, when atheism was the only creed which the nation would profess. We have no instance in history of a people throwing equal scorn on their Creator, and neither have we any of a people being plunged in equal depths of misery. There was then given a demonstration, never to be forgotten, that to throw off the restraints of religion is to proclaim the carnival of anarchy and bloodshed; and that the getting quit of the fear of God is the surest mode of undermining government, invading the rights of property, and turning a civilized people into a horde of barbarians and assassins. But if such be the consequences of making void God's law, what effect will be wrought upon the few by whom that law is yet revered and prized? Certainly, not that they will love the law less, but rather that they will love it more. If I saw thousands writhing in incurable agony, and could trace the tremendous disease to the gradual disuse, and, at length, final rejection of a medicine, beyond all doubt that medicine would appear to me more precious than ever; and it would be from the throwing away of this medicine that I best learnt its value. In like manner, if I can see that the making void God's law is the most effectual mode of covering a land with wretchedness, unquestionably it is in the being made void that this law displays its claims to

my attachment. And if, therefore, we lived in times when a mighty infidelity was pervading our cities and our villages, and men were advancing by rapid strides towards an open contempt, or denial of God; the divine law, if we had ever learnt to prize it, would commend itself increasingly to our affections, as impiety went onward to its consummation. We should more and more recognize the power of this law to confer happiness, because we should more and more observe how the despising it produced misery. We should more and more perceive in it an engine for counteracting human degeneracy, because there would be, on all sides, the material of conviction, that, in setting it aside, men sank to the lowest level of degradation. We should more and more regard it as the best boon which God had conferred on this creation, because we should increasingly discover that it could only be removed by substituting a fearful curse in its stead. And would not then this law appear more deserving than ever of our veneration and attachment? If we ever before prized it above gold, should we not now prize it above fine gold? There are two ways in which the commandments of God prove equally their excellence—by the blessed results which follow on obedience, and by the tremendous results which follow on disobedience. The former are to be seen when the law is observed, the latter when that law is made void. But since, in each case, the same truth is exhibited—that of the power of the law to confer happiness—in each case, the same reason is given why the law should be increasingly the object of our love.

We will take a simple instance, and gather from it the principle on which we now insist. A young person is born of religious parents, and educated in the fear of the Almighty. But the father and mother have been gathered to the grave, and the temptations of the world prevail over their instructions, and the child becomes the irreligious and profligate. He passes from one degree of wickedness to another, till at length, as the perpetrator of some fearful crime, he waits the shame of a public execution. And in this condition he is visited by a clergyman, who

perhaps remembers the days of his youth, whilst his honored parents were yet alive, and himself an inmate of the village-school. It is a grievous and sickening spectacle, that, of one who was cradled in piety, and into whose opening intelligence were distilled the precepts of righteousness, thus lying as an outcast, branded with indignity, and expecting the penalty of death. And the minister asks of him the history of his guilt, how it came to pass that he wandered so far, and so fatally from uprightiness. The whole is traced to neglect of the commandments of God,—a neglect which began perhaps in minor points, but rapidly increased till the whole law was made void. And we shall not attempt to tell you with what bitterness of soul, and what intensity of self-reproach, the criminal recalls the dying looks and words of his parents, as they bequeathed him the Bible as his best treasure, and besought him, with many tears, to take its precepts as his guide. The uppermost and crushing feelings in his spirit is, that, had he followed the parting advice of his father and mother, he would have lived honorably and happily, and would never have thus become a by-word and an execration; every thing earthly shipwrecked, and nothing heavenly secured. But we only want to know what would be the thoughts of the minister in regard of God's commandments, as he retired from the cell where he had delivered the messages of the Gospel. He has been looking on an instance of the consequences of making void the divine law. He cannot but contrast what the criminal is, with what he would have been, had he not made void that law. And does he not gather from the contrast a higher sense than he had before entertained of the excellence of that law, and of its might in contributing to the present, as well as future welfare of mankind? We can quite believe that, as he retreated from the overpowering scene, his mind agonized by the thought that one, of whom he had augured well, was thus hopelessly reduced to a desolate and ruined thing, the value of God's law, as a rule of human conduct, and a safeguard of human happiness, would be felt by him in a degree which he had never yet experienced; and that it

would be into such a form as this that his reflections would shape themselves,—indeed, Lord, he hath made void thy law; therefore, as for me, "therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold."

Now it is not difficult thus to trace a connection between the making void of God's law, and the heightened love which the righteous entertain to that law. The law cannot be made void, whether nationally or individually, without an accompanying demonstration that it is both designed and adapted to bless the human race. And we need not add, that every such demonstration enhances the worth of the law in the estimation of the righteous, so that the transition is very natural from the statement of a general profligacy of manners to that of an increased love to the commandments of God.

But we have yet another mode in which to exhibit the connection between the verses, though it may have already suggested itself to your minds.—We have hitherto supposed the strengthened attachment which David expresses towards the law, to have been produced by the fact that this law was made void. But we now refer it to the fact that it was time for God to work. We consider, that is, that when the Psalmist says, "therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold," the reason is to be found in the character of the times, in the season being one at which God must bring judgments on the earth. "Since thy law is made void, it is time for thee, Lord, to interfere in vengeance; and, on this account, because wrath must be let loose, therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold."

And if this be regarded as the connection between the verses, you will readily admit that there is abundant force in the reason of the Psalmist. If there be one season at which, more than at another, the righteous feel the worth of revelation, and the blessedness of obeying its precepts, the season must be that of danger and trouble. Whether the danger and trouble be public or domestic; whether it be his country, or only his own household, over which calamity hangs; the man of piety finds a consolation in religion



which makes him more than ever prize the revealed will of God. There is a beauty and energy in the Bible which nothing but affliction can bring out and display; and men know comparatively little of the preciousness of Scriptural promises, and the magnificence of Scriptural hopes, until placed in circumstances of difficulty and distress. There are always one or two stations from which you gain the best view of a noble and diversified landscape; and it is when "constrained to dwell with Meshech, and to have our habitation among the tents of Kedar," that our gaze includes most of what is glorious and brilliant in the scheme of divine mercy. It is the promise of God in the 91st Psalm—a promise addressed to every one who makes God his trust,—"I will be with him in trouble." But when or where is not God with us? Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? Indeed we well know that every where is the universe full of Deity, and that, at no time, and in no place, can we be at a distance from God; and yet, as though in the day of darkness and disaster, the Omnipresent could so redouble his presence, that every other day should be, in comparison, one of absence, the promise is, "I will be with him in trouble." And the promise is so fulfilled in the experience of the righteous, that they will own their sorrows to have been far more than compensated by the consolations afforded in the hour of tribulation, so that it would have been clearly for their loss to have escaped their trials. They are gainers by their troubles—for God removes no good without leaving a greater; if he takes away an earthly friend, he gives them more of himself. Such we affirm to be the experience of the righteous; and we are confident that we might appeal to many of our hearers for evidence that we overstate not this experience. There are many of you who can testify to a power in the Bible of which you were not conscious, and to a supporting energy in divine grace, which you scarcely suspected, until your households were invaded by calamity. And if such be the fact, what feeling will be more excited in the righteous, when compelled to own that it is time

for God to work, than that of love to the divine law? If they see trouble approaching, what will they do but cling with greater earnestness to that which alone can support them, and which they know will never fail? Will not their affection to God's word be vastly enhanced by the consciousness that they are about to be in circumstances when the promises of that word must be put to the proof, and by the certainty that the putting them to the proof will issue in their thorough fulfilment? If they have loved the word above gold in the hour of prosperity, they must love it above fine gold, as they mark the gatherings of adversity.

"It is time for thee, Lord, to work."  
 "They have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword;" and the Judge of men must arise, and vindicate his insulted authority. But I know on whom the mark of deliverance will be set, when the men with the slaughter-weapons are commanded to pass through the land. I know that where there is obedience to thy law, there will be security from thy wrath. And hence that law is more precious in my sight than it ever was before—"it is time for thee to work; therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."

"It is time for thee, Lord, to work."  
 There is much in myself which requires the processes of the refiner, much of the corruptible to be removed, much of the dross to be purged away. But if it be needful that I be cast into the furnace of affliction, I have thy precepts to which to cling, thy promises on which to rest. I find that thy word comforts me in the prospect; I know that it will sustain me in the endurance; and hence, because it is time for thee to work, therefore is thy word dearer to me "than the gold, yea, than the fine gold."

"It is time for thee, Lord, to work."  
 The season of my pilgrimage draws to a close; the earthly house of this tabernacle must be taken down; and the hour is at hand when thou wilt recall my spirit, and summon me to the judgment seat. Great God! what can be of worth to me in a time such as this? What can I value, when every thing

earthly is slipping from my hold? Thy commandments—commandments which direct me to believe upon thy Son—thy law, a law so obeyed by the Mediator in my stead, that its every precept acquits me, and its every reward awaits me—these are precious to me, unspeakably more precious than ever before. I know that thy strange work must be wrought on me, the work of dissolution. I know that the time is come, when I must go hence and be no more seen. But I know also that, "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from thy law." I know that "blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." The nearer, therefore, the approaches of death, the more worthless appears every thing but thy

word, O my God! The gold, and the fine gold, can profit me nothing; for "it is time for thee to work," and earth, with all its treasures, must be left. But thy commandments—a commandment that death be swallowed up in victory, a commandment that the corruptible put on incorruption, a commandment that new heavens and a new earth rise as the everlasting home of righteousness—these give me gladness as I enter the dark valley; these I would not barter for the richest and costliest of earthly things—"it is time for thee, Lord, to work: therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold."

We have nothing to add but an earnest prayer that we may all be able to say from the heart with David, "Oh, how I love thy law; it is my meditation all thy day."

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## SERMON.

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### ON THE STRENGTH WHICH FAITH GAINS BY EXPERIENCE.

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"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."—2 Timothy, 1: 12.

You will observe, if you consult the context of this passage, that St. Paul is speaking of our Redeemer. In the tenth verse he had made mention of our Savior Jesus Christ, as having *abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel*. The discourse is then continuous up to the words which I have just read to you; so that we are not left in doubt as to the being upon whom St. Paul fastened his faith. It was Christ with whom the apostle had left some great deposit, and of whose power and faithfulness he expresses his deep-wrought persuasion. And it will therefore be our business, in any inquiries to which this passage may lead, to bear careful-

ly in mind that Deity, united with humanity in the Mediator's person, constituted that object of faith which had been proved so trust-worthy by the teacher of the Gentiles.

Now there is an important distinction to be drawn between experience and faith, and which is clearly marked out to us by these words of the apostle. It is certain that a man cannot be saved without faith, but it is just as certain that he may be saved without experience. You must all perceive that if the matter under review be the power and sufficiency of the Savior, there must be faith before there can be experience. We can know nothing of Christ, except by rumor and hearsay,



until we believe in him. But unquestionably we might believe in him, and then the arrest of death coming upon us at the instant of the outputting of faith, all personal knowledge of him must be referred to another and a higher state of being. So that it would be accurate to say, that while faith is indispensable, experience is not indispensable to salvation. We have taken, however, the extreme case. And though it be certainly supposable that a man might enter into heaven without experience, properly so called, yet it is true, as a general rule, that faith will be followed by experience, and that whosoever believes in Christ will go on to *know whom he hath believed*. We may therefore say of experience, that it is a kind of touchstone to which faith should be brought. For whilst we would set ourselves most earnestly, and most assiduously, against the resolving religion into a mere thing of frames and of feelings, we are bound to hold that it is no matter of frigid or heartless speculation, but that a real christian must have a real sense of the power and preciousness of Christ. We consider that it would be altogether idle to maintain that a man may believe in Christ as a Savior for months or years, and yet have no *witness in himself* to the energies of that Being towards whom his faith is directed. Faith is that mighty, though mysterious principle, which attaches a man to Christ. And we may fairly set it down as impossible that there should be actual membership between ourselves and the Mediator, and yet nothing of personal practical acquaintance with his sufficiencies for the office which he fills. He who believes will *taste and see that the Lord is gracious*; and knowledge being superadded to faith, he will be his own testimony that the Bible is no cunningly-devised fable; but that Christ crucified, though *unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness*, is nevertheless *the power of God and the wisdom of God*.

And we think it worth while to observe, before we quit these introductory remarks, that experience thus corroborating faith, is at the root of that stanchness which poor men will exhibit when plied with the arguments of the sceptic. You will not find that an

uneducated believer is more easily overborne than a well-educated, by the doubts and objections of infidelity. If the illiterate man be not so able as the instructed, to expose the hollowness, and to demonstrate the fallacy of the reasoning by which he is assailed, he will be to the full as rigorous in his resistance of the attack, and will be no more shaken from his faith through want of acquaintance with the evidences of christianity, than if he were equipped with all that armor of proof which has been heaped together by the learned of the earth. And we hold the explanation of the phenomenon to be, that the poor man *knows whom he hath believed*. If he can make no appeal to history and to science, and so fetch no witness from the records of the earth and its inhabitants, he can travel into the world which lies within himself; and he gathers from what has been transacted there, and experienced there, a mightier testimony than was ever wrung from external evidence. When he began to believe, it may be true that he could give but little account of any ground-work on which he builded his faith. But as he goes on believing, his faith may be said to become more and more built upon knowledge; and there will be wrought in him gradually, through his own personal experience of the power and faithfulness of the Savior, something of the persuasion which is expressed by St. Paul, and which will more than supply the place of those ramparts against infidelity which have been thrown up by the labors of the champions of christianity. And though we have directed our remarks to the case of the poor and the illiterate, we would not have it thought that they are inapplicable to others. It is quite evident that the great apostle himself, than whom there hath never arisen a man better able to demonstrate, on external grounds, that Jesus was the Christ, strengthened his faith by his knowledge, and fetched out of his own experience his choicest proof of the fulness which is laid up in the Savior. And thus with ourselves; whatever our rank in society, and whatever our advantages of education, we must place ourselves on the same level with the mean and the uninstructed, when searching out the best evidence that

Christ can save to the uttermost; and there will never be a proof half so rigid, and half so overwhelming, of the ability of the Mediator to guard the bodies and the souls of his people, as that which we derive from things already done for us, in the warfare which we prosecute against Satan and the world.

We will now pass on, from these general remarks, to a closer examination of the subject brought before us by our text. We ask you once more to observe, that with St. Paul, experience came evidently in to the corroboration of faith; so that the apostle's faith was stronger, and that, too, as a consequence of what he knew of Christ, than when he had first of all started from the ranks of the persecutor. He had gone through affliction and toil in the service of the Savior, and he felt assured that now the period was not far distant, when he should be called to brave martyrdom in his cause. But in all the trials through which he had passed, there had been administered unto him such abundance of support and consolation, that former troubles, in place of disheartening, only nerved him for the endurance of fresh. He was nothing disquieted at the prospect of imprisonment and death. In carving his way through opposition already overcome, he had realized so much of the sustaining might of the Redeemer, that he could look forward with a noble assurance to a final, and still fiercer combat. If indeed there had been failure in the communications of assistance—if, depending on the promised support, he had gone to the battle, and there met with discomfiture—he might have been conscious of something akin to mistrust and shrinking, when he saw his foes mustering for the last assault. But he *knew whom he had believed*; he had put Christ, as it were, to the proof, and obtained nothing but an evidence, every day strengthened, that all the promises in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God the Father. And now, though he had deposited his all with the Redeemer,—though he had gathered, so to speak, his every interest, time and eternity, into one cast, and staked the whole upon the faithfulness of Christ,—he was not disturbed with the lightest apprehension of risk or peril; but, look-

ing composedly on the advancing tide, which, upon human calculations, was to sweep him away, and bury all his hopes in its depths, he could avouch his unflinching persuasion, that Jesus was able to keep that which he had committed unto him against that day, when he should be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

Such, we think, is the statement of our text, when taken in the breadth of its meaning. And if we now consider the passage as descriptive simply of what is, or what ought to be, the experience of every believer in Christ, we deduce from it two facts, each of which deserves the best of your attention.

In the first place, WE ASCERTAIN THAT THE BELIEVER OBTAINS A KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

In the second place, WE DETERMINE THAT THE KNOWLEDGE THUS OBTAINED IS SUCH AS TO GENERATE CONFIDENCE.

We will give ourselves to the examination of these facts in succession, discussing, at the same time, such collateral truths as shall seem presented by the words of the apostle.

In the first place, then, A BELIEVER OBTAINS A KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. Now we think that it may be both from his own experience, and from the experience of others, that a christian *knows whom he hath believed*. You may indeed argue, that so far as the experience of others is concerned, there is no necessity that a man should be a believer in Christ in order to his obtaining acquaintance with Christ. Assuredly any one, whatsoever his own personal sentiments on religion, may give attention to the biography of God-fearing men, and gather from the dealings of which they have been the subjects, all the information which they furnish with regard to the character of the Mediator. But we deny this proposition, though it may seem too simple to admit of any question. Unless a man be himself a converted man, he cannot enter into the facts and the feelings which this biography lays open. The whole record will wear to him an air of strangeness and of mystery; and if he have the candor not to resolve into fanaticism the registered experience, he will be forced to pass it over as thoroughly unintelligible. If a man know nothing of chemistry, and if he take up



a treatise upon chemistry, he is at a loss in every page, and can make no way, through want of that acquaintance with the subject which the work presupposes. And if the author be giving something of his own history, and if he carry the reader into his laboratory, and count over to him experiments, and bring out results, why, the man who is no chemist, and who is therefore altogether ignorant of the properties of the substances on which the scientific man works, will understand not, or appreciate not, the discoveries which are reached of the secrets of nature; but with all the apparatus of knowledge spread before him, will remain as ignorant as ever, through the not having mastered the alphabet of chemistry. And what is true of such a science as chemistry, we hold to be equally true of practical christianity. The experiments, if we may so speak, which have been made in the soul of a man of piety and prayer,—experiments of the power of grace and of indwelling sin—and the results also which have been derived from such experiments; we would certainly contend that these cannot be understood, and cannot be entered into, unless the individual who peruses the record have something of fellow-feeling with the subject of the biography—unless, that is, there shall have passed on him that renovating change which has brought him out of nominal into real christianity. After all, the deriving knowledge of Christ from the experience of others must be through an act of faith. It is by belief in testimony, that what has been done for our fellow-men by the Redeemer, is turned into information to ourselves of his sufficiencies for his office. So that it were fair to argue, that a man must have faith, and therefore religious experience for himself, otherwise he possesses not the faculty by which to extract knowledge from the religious experience of others.

But let a man be a believer in Christ, and every day of his life will bring him intelligence, from external testimony, of the worth of the Being on whom he fastens his faith. The witnesses who stand out and attest the excellences of the Mediator, occupy the whole scale of intelligence, from the Creator downwards, through every rank of the crea-

ture. The man of faith hears the Father himself bearing testimony by a voice from heaven, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" He hears angels and archangels lauding and magnifying Christ's glorious name: for do not the winged hierarchies of heaven bow to him the knee, and that too as the consequence of his work of mediation? He hears patriarchs who lived in the infancy of the world; prophets who took up in succession the mighty strain, and sent it on from century to century; apostles who went out to the battle with idolatry, and *counted not their lives dear to them*, so that they might plant the cross amid the wilds of superstition:—he hears all these, with one heart and one voice, witnessing to Jesus, as the Son of the Highest, the Savior of the lost. And he hears, moreover, the martyrs and the confessors of every generation; the saints who have held fast their allegiance on the rack and in the furnace; the noble champions who have risen up in the days of a declining church, and shed their blood like water in defence of the purity of doctrine; he hears the men of *whom the world was not worthy*, uttering an unflinching attestation to the willingness and ability of Christ to succor those who give themselves to his service. And he hears, finally, a voice from the thousands who, in more private stations, have taken Christ as their Lord and their God; who, in dependance on his might, have gone unobtrusively through duty and trial, and then have lain down on the death-bed, and worn a smile amid the decayings of the body,—and this voice bears a witness, stanch and decisive, that He *in whom they have trusted*, has proved himself all-sufficient to deliver. And if we do right in arguing that there is poured in gradually upon a believer this scarcely measurable evidence to the power and faithfulness of Christ, will it not come to pass that he grows every day more acquainted with the excellencies of the Savior; so that, by gathering in from the accumulated stores of the testimony of others, he will be able, with a continually strengthening assurance, to declare, *I know whom I have believed.*

If it were possible that this testimony of others should be appreciated and grasped without faith, or without con-

version, then it would be certain that a vast way might be made in the knowledge of Christ, by men whose own experience could furnish no information. But, forasmuch as on the grounds already laid down, there must be a prepared soil for the reception of these testimonies to Christ, we think it fair to contend that no man can know Christ unless he believe in Christ, even though the knowledge may be fetched from the recorded attestations of every order of intelligence.

It is not, however, so much from what is told him by others, as from what he experiences in himself, that a believer *knows whom he hath believed*. You will observe that as a result of his acting faith upon Christ, he is engaged in a moral warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil. He goes to the combat in no strength of his own, but simply in the might of his risen Redeemer. And the question is, whether thus putting to the proof the Savior of men, he obtains an evidence for, or an evidence against, his ability to help and sustain? And can we hesitate as to the side on which the testimony turns? If a believer is at any time overborne in the conflict; if he last gain the victory, or the world for a while re-assert the sovereignty of which it hath been stripped; shall it be supposed for a moment that such result may be ascribed to deficiency in the assistance which Christ lives to communicate? If a christian is overthrown, it is because he is surprised off his guard. But is Christ chargeable with his being off his guard? It is because he is remiss in prayer, or because he parleys with temptation, or because he avails not himself of the armor provided by God. But is Christ chargeable with his negligence, with his indecision, with his carelessness in the use of instituted means? We may lay it down as an ascertained truth, that Christ never failed a believer in his hour of combat. The believer may be mastered; the enemy may come in like a flood, and there may be no efficient resistance opposed to the inrush. But whensoever there is a meeting of the foe in the strength of the Lord, there is a realization of the truth of the promise, *My grace is sufficient for thee. God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are*

*able*. God, so to speak, measures and weighs every trial before he permits it to be allotted. He sets it side by side with the circumstances and strength of the party upon whom it is to fall. And if he ever perceive that the temptation overpasses the capacity of resistance, so that, if thus tempted, an individual would be tempted above that he is able; then God is represented to us as refusing to permit the appointment, and therefore as watching that believers may never be unavoidably brought into such a position that their yielding to evil shall be a matter of necessity. And it certainly must follow from these scriptural premises, that the being overpowered can never be charged on a deficiency in succor; and that, though it were idle to plead for the possibility of our attaining perfection, yet the impossibility arises not from God's communicating too little of assistance, but solely from our own want of vigilance in appropriating and applying the freely offered aids.

We take it, therefore, as the experience of a believer, that the Captain of Salvation strengthens his followers for the moral conflict to which they are pledged. How often, when Satan has brought all his powers to the assault, and the man has seemed within a hairbreadth of yielding, how often has an earnest prayer, thrown like an arrow to the mercy-seat, caused Christ to appear, as he once did to Joshua, the captain of the Lord's host; and the tide of battle has been turned, and the foe has been routed, and the oppressed one delivered! How often, when an evil passion has almost goaded the believer into compliance with its dictates, and there seemed no longer any likelihood of its being kept down or ejected, how, by dealing with this passion as dealt the apostles of old with foul spirits which had entered into the body, calling over it the name of the Lord Jesus,—how often, we say, has the passion been cast out, and the possessed man restored quickly to soundness and peace! How often, in looking forward to duties imposed on him by his christian profession, has the believer been conscious of a kind of shrinking at the prospect! It has seemed to him almost hopeless that he should bear up under the pressure of labor; that he should



meet faithfully every claim upon his time and attention; and that he should discharge, with any thing of becoming carefulness, the various offices with which he sees himself intrusted. But when he has reflected on himself as simply an instrument in the hands of his Master, and resolved to go on in a single dependence on the helps which are promised through Christ, has not the mountain become literally a plain; so that duties which, at a distance, seemed altogether overwhelming, have proved, when entered upon, the very reverse of oppressive! And what shall we assert to be the result of this continual experience of the sufficiencies of Christ, unless it be that the believer *knows whom he hath believed?* The stone which God laid in Zion becomes to him, according to the prophetic description, *a tried stone*. He no longer needs to appeal to the experience of others. *He has the witness in himself*, and he can use the language which the Samaritans used to the woman who first told them of Christ as the prophet,—*We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.*

There can be nothing clearer than the connection between experience and knowledge. If I meet difficulties in Christ's strength, and master them; if I face enemies in Christ's strength, and vanquish them; if I undertake duties in Christ's strength, and discharge them,—the difficulties, and the enemies, and the duties being such as I could not grapple with by my own unassisted might,—then my experience is actually knowledge; for experiencing Christ to be faithful and powerful, I certainly know Christ to be faithful and powerful.

We may yet further observe, that knowledge, the produce of experience, is of a broader extent than our foregoing remarks would appear to mark out. The believer in Christ, if indeed he live not so far below his privileges as almost to forfeit the title, must be one who, having felt the burden of sin, has come weary and heavy laden to the Savior, and obtained the removal of the oppression from his conscience; and will it not therefore hold good, that, through experience, he knows Christ as the Lamb of God which tak-

eth away the sin of the world? He must, moreover, be one who, painfully alive to his own utter inability to obey God's law for himself, has turned to Jesus in search of a surety, and found, in that unvarying faithfulness with which he acted out the precepts of the Father, just that procuring cause of acceptance which is required by the fallen; and will it not therefore be true, that through experience he knows Christ as *the Lord our Righteousness?* He must, moreover—at least if he have travelled at all beyond the very outset of the life of faith—have been visited with spiritual trials, and perhaps also with temporal; and he will have carried his sorrows to the Redeemer, as to one who *can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities*, and he will have obtained the oil and the wine of consolation; and will he not therefore, from this his experience, know Christ as that gracious being who *comforteth them that are cast down, who bindeth up the broken-hearted?* He must yet further be one who, conscious that the world which lieth within himself is overspread with defilement, and that he is possessed of no native energy by which to carry purity into the recesses of the heart, has turned to Jesus in order that he might obtain the inworking of a holiness which should fit him for heaven, and has realized the processes of an on-going sanctification; and does not then his experience cause him to know Christ as *made unto his people wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?* He must, finally, be one who, feeling himself no creature of a day, but sublimely conscious that immortality throbb'd in his veins, has looked fruitlessly on earth for an object which might fill his soul; and then fastening upon *God manifest in the flesh*, has found the enormous void occupied to the overflow,—and hath not then his experience led him to know Christ as formed in his people the hope of glory? We might extend this adduction of particulars; but we think that what has been already advanced will suffice for our carrying you along with us in the conclusion, that where faith resides, there must be experience; and that experience, in natural course, produces knowledge,—nay, rather that experience is identical with

knowledge; so that all true believers, who have walked a while in the heaven-ward path, may declare with St. Paul, *I know whom I have believed.*

And we would again press upon your attention the important fact, that as faith, being followed by experience, will issue in knowledge, so the knowledge thus acquired will tell back upon the faith, and throw into it nerve and stability. We are persuaded that, by a wonderful and most merciful arrangement, God hath ordered that experience should grow into such a witness for the truth of christianity, that scepticism, though brought forward with all that is pointed in argument and splendid in oratory, hath literally no likelihood whatever of success, even when the attack is on a believer who has nothing of human weapon at his disposal. If you sent the most accomplished of infidels into the cottage of the meanest of our peasants, or into the workshop of the poorest of our artisans,—the peasant, or the artisan, being supposed a true believer in Christ—we should entertain not the slightest apprehension as to the issue of a conflict between parties apparently so ill-matched; but on the contrary, should await the result in the most perfect assurance, that though there might be no taking off the objections of the infidel, there would be no overthrowing the faith of the believer. Scepticism can make no way where there is real christianity; all its triumphs are won on the field of nominal christianity. And it is a phenomenon which might, at first sight, well draw our amazement, that just where we should look for the least of resistance, and where we should conclude that, almost as a matter of course, the sophistry of the infidel might enter and carry every thing before it—that there we find a power of withstanding which is perhaps even greater than could be exhibited in a higher and more educated circle—so that the believing mechanic shall outdo the believing philosopher in the vigor with which he repels the insinuations of a sceptic. We are not arguing that the mechanic will make the most way in confuting the sceptic. On the contrary, there will be a vast probability against his being able to expose the fallacy of a solitary objec-

tion. But then he will take refuge simply in his experience. He will not, as the philosopher may do, divide himself between experience and argument. If he have no apparatus at his command with which to meet, and dissect, and lay bare, a hollow, but plausible reasoning, he has his own knowledge to which to turn—and then the whole question lies between a theory and a matter-of-fact. His knowledge is matter-of-fact—and argument will always be worthless if it set itself against matter-of-fact. *He knows whom he hath believed.* There may be in this knowledge none of the elements of another man's conviction,—but there is to himself the material of an overpowering assurance. It might be quite impossible to take this knowledge, and make it available as an argument with which to bear down on his infidel assailant. It is a visionary thing to his opponent—but it is a matter of fact to himself. And we contend that in this lies the grand secret of a poor man's capability of resisting the advancements of infidelity. It is no theory with him that Jesus is the Christ. It is no speculation that the Gospel offers a remedy for those moral disorders which sin hath fastened on the creature. He has not merely read the Bible—he has felt the Bible. He has not merely heard of the medicine—he has taken the medicine. And now, we again say, when you would argue with him against christianity, you argue with him against matter-of-fact. You argue against the existence of fire, to a man who has been scorched by the flame; and against the existence of water, to a man who has been drenched in the depths; and against the existence of light, to a man who has looked out on the landscape; and argument can make no head when it sets itself against matter-of-fact.

If I had labored under a painful and deadly disease,—and if I had gone to a physician,—and if I had received from him a medicine which brought the health back into my limbs—what success would attend the most clever of reasoners who should set himself to prove to me that no such being as this physician had ever existed, or that there was no virtue whatsoever in the draught which had wrought in me with so healing an energy? He



might argue with a keenness and a shrewdness which left me quite over-matched. There might be an ingenuity in his historic doubts with regard to the existence of the physician; and there might be an apparent science in his analysis of the medicine, and his exposure of its worthlessness; and I, on my part, might be quite unable to meet him on his own ground, to show the fault and the falsehood of his reasoning. But you can never suppose that my incapacity to refute argument would lead me to the giving up a matter of fact. I should just be in the case of the man in the Gospel, to whom Christ had given sight, and whom the Pharisees plied with doubts, derived from the presumed sinfulness of the Savior, in regard to the possibility of the miracle. I should answer with this man, only varying the language, so that it might square with the form of objection: *Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.* And precisely, in like manner, a believer, with no other resources at his disposal, can throw himself unhesitatingly on his own experience; and this, rendering christianity to him all matter of fact, makes him proof against the subtleties of the most insidious infidelity.

So that we require of you to learn from the subject under review, that God hath woven into true religion all the elements of a successful resistance to cavil and objection, leaving not the very poorest, and the most illiterate of his people open to the inroad of the enemies of christianity; but causing that there rise up from their own experience such ramparts of strength, that if they have no artillery with which to battle at the adversary, there is at least no risk of their own citadel being stormed.

And though we have not time to follow out at greater length the train of thought which this portion of our subject originates, we commend to your attention, as worthy of being most carefully pondered over, the provision which is made in experience against infidelity. We may have been accustomed to regard the evidences of christianity as lying out of reach of the poor and the illiterate; and we may have looked with a peculiar dread on the descend-

ings of the agents of scepticism to the lower and less equipped ranks of society. And beyond all question, if you just take the uneducated mass of our population, there is a far greater risk than with the well educated, that the diffusion amongst them of infidel publications will issue in the warping them from the faith of their fathers. There may be something like stamina of resistance in the higher and the middling classes; for if indifferent to religion, they may be idolaters of reason, and they will therefore require something better than worn-out and flimsy objections before they throw away as false, what has been handed down to them as true. But when infidelity goes down, so to speak, to the inferior and less cultivated soils, there is certainly a fearful probability that it may scatter, unmolested, the seeds of a dark harvest of apostacy; and that men who have no reason to give why they are even nominally christians, will be wrought upon by the most empty and common-place arguments, to put from them christianity as a scheme of falsehood and priestcraft.

We are thoroughly alive to this danger; and we think it not to be disputed, that the incapacity of the lower classes to meet infidelity on any fair terms exposes them, in a more ordinary degree, to the risk of being prevailed on to exchange nominal religion for no religion at all. But this, we would have you observe, is the sum total of the risk. We have no fears for any thing, excepting nominal christianity. And though we count that the giving up even of nominal christianity would just be equivalent to the overspreading a country with ferocity and barbarism, there being none of the charities of life in the train of infidelity—yet we think it a cause of mighty gratulation, that real christianity has so much of the *vis inertia* in its nature, that we are quit of all dread of its being borne down even in a wide-spread apostacy. Is it not a beautiful truth, that the well equipped agents of infidelity might go successively to the library of the pious theologian, and the hovel of the pious laborer, and make not one jot more impression on the uninstructed subject of godliness, than on the deep-read master of all the evidences of our faith?

Oh, we take it for an exquisite proof of the carefulness of God over his people, that the poor cottager, in the midst of his ignorance of all that external witness which we are wont to appeal to as gloriously conclusive on the claims of christianity, is not to be overcome by the most subtle or the fiercest assault; but that whilst men of a higher education will lay empires and centuries under a rigid contribution, and sweep in auxiliaries from the disclosures of science, and walk with a dominant step the firmament, gathering conviction from the rich assembling of stars; this child of poverty, but at the same time of grace, shall throw himself upon himself; and turning experience into evidence, be inaccessible to the best concerted attack; and make answer, without flinching, to every cavil and every objection, *I know whom I have believed.* His faith, whatsoever it be at first, becomes soon a faith built upon knowledge; and then, if not skilful enough to show his adversary wrong, he is too much his own witness to give harborage to a fear that he himself is not right.

But enough on the first fact which we proposed to investigate, the fact that a believer obtains a knowledge of Christ. The second fact is almost involved in the first,—so that the slightest reference to truth already made out, will show you THAT THE KNOWLEDGE THUS OBTAINED IS SUCH AS TO GENERATE CONFIDENCE.

You observe that, in the case of St. Paul, knowledge was accompanied by a most thorough persuasion, that Christ was able to keep safe the deposit which he had given into his guardianship. We infer, therefore, that the knowledge, since it produced this persuasion, must have been knowledge of Christ as possessing those attributes which insured the security of whatsoever might be intrusted to his custody. And this is precisely what we have proved to hold good in regard generally to believers. The knowledge which their experience furnishes of Christ is knowledge of his power, of his faithfulness, of his love. So far as they have yet made trial of Christ, they can apply to themselves the words of Joshua to Israel, *Not one thing hath failed of all the good things*

*which the Lord your God spake concerning you.* And certainly, if the result of every experiment is a new witness to the joint ability and willingness of the Mediator to succor and preserve his people, you cannot well avoid the conclusion, that knowledge must produce confidence; in other words, that the more a believer knows of Christ, the more persuaded will he be of his worthiness to be intrusted with all the interests of man. If our knowledge of Christ prove to us that, up to the present moment, Christ hath done for us all that he hath promised, it is clear that this knowledge must be a groundwork for confidence, that what remains unfulfilled will be accomplished with an equal fidelity. Already has the believer committed every thing to Christ. Faith—saving faith—whatever other definitions may be framed—is best described as that act of the soul by which the whole man is given over to the guardianship of the Mediator. He who thus resigns himself to Jesus avouches two things; first, his belief that he needs a protector; secondly, his belief that Christ is just that protector which his necessities require. And though you may resolve saving faith into more numerous elements, you will find that these two are not only the chief, but that they include all others out of which it is constituted; so that he who believes in Christ, gives himself up to the keeping of Christ. And forasmuch as experience proves to him, that heretofore he has been safe in this custody, assuredly the acquired knowledge must go to the working in him a persuasion that hereafter he shall be kept in an equal security.

We thus trace the connection between the knowledge of the first, and the persuasion of the second part of our text. We show you, that a believer will gather from his own experience of Christ the material of confidence in Christ's ability to preserve all that is committed to his keeping. Experience being his evidence that Christ hath never yet failed him, is also his earnest that the future comes charged with nothing but the accomplishment of promise. And therefore is he confident. Oh, if I deceive not myself,—if I have actually been enabled, through the aid of God's Spirit, to fasten my faith up-



on Him who died for me, and rose, and lives to intercede,—why should I not stay myself on this persuasion of St. Paul, that Christ is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day? Soul and body—the believer commits both to the Mediator. The soul—she must be detached from the tabernacle of flesh, and go forth alone on an unexplored pathway. Who shall tell us the awfulness of being suddenly launched into infinity? Who shall conceive the prodigies of that moment, when, shaking itself free from the trammels of the body, the spirit struggles forth, solitary and naked, and must make its way across unknown tracts into the burning presence of an unseen God? Terrible dissolution! Who ever saw a fellow-man die without being almost staggered at the thought of that mighty journey upon which the unclothed soul had just been compelled to enter? But shall the believer in Christ Jesus be appalled? Does he not know Christ as having ransomed the souls of his people, washed them in his blood, and covered them with his righteousness? Has he not found a witness in himself, that precious is his soul in the sight of the Redeemer? What then? Shall he be otherwise than persuaded that Christ will watch over the soul at the instant of separation from the body; and putting forth that authority which has been given him in heaven and earth, send a legion of bright angels to convey the spirit, and lead it to himself? Then safely lodged in Paradise, the soul shall await reunion with the body, unspeakably, though not yet completely blessed. To all this is Christ Jesus pledged; and knowing from his own experience that Jesus makes no pledge which he does not redeem, the believer commits his soul to Christ, persuaded that he is able to keep that which he hath committed unto him against that day. The body—it must be spoiled of life, and bound up for burial, and left to corruption. It is a mysterious destiny, that of this frame-work of matter. Its atoms may be scattered to the four winds of heaven. They may go down to the caverns of the great deep,—they may enter into the construction of other bodies. And certainly, unless there be brought to the agency a power every

way infinite, it might well be regarded as an absurd expectation that the dis-severed particles should again come together, and that the identical body, with all its organs and all its limbs, which is broken up piecemeal by the blow of death, should be re-formed and re-moulded, the same in every thing, except in the being incorruptible and imperishable. But the believer knows that there is a distinct and solemn promise of Christ which has respect to the bodies of his people. *I will raise him up at the last day*, is the repeated assurance in regard to the man who believes upon his name,—so that the Redeemer is as deeply pledged to be the guardian of a believer's dust, as of a believer's soul. He ransomed matter as well as spirit; and descending himself into the sepulchre, scattered the seeds of a new subsistence, which, germinating on the morning of the judgment, shall cover the globe with the vast harvest of its buried population. And, therefore, the believer can be confident. Overwhelming in its greatness as the achievement is, it surpasses not the energies of the Agent unto whom it is ascribed. Christ raised himself—an unspeakably mightier exploit than raising me. Can I not then take share in the persuasion of St. Paul? Let darkness be woven for my shroud, and the grave be hollowed for my bed, and the worm be given for my companion—with thee, O Christ, I intrust this body. *I know whom I have believed*. The winds may disperse, the waters may engulf, and the fires may rarify the atoms which made up this frame; *but I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God*. Thus, body as well as soul, the believer commits himself wholly to Christ,—and experience witnessing to Christ's power and Christ's faithfulness, he can exclaim with the apostle, *I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*. That day—we need not tell the believer what day. His thoughts and his hopes are on the second advent of his Lord; and though no day has been specified, yet speak of *that day*, and the allusion is distinctly understood; the mind springs forward to meet the descending pomp of the Judge,

and that august period is anticipated, when, vindicating before the universe the fidelity of his guardianship, Christ shall consign his followers to glory and blessedness; and, apportioning noble allotments to both body and soul, prove that nothing has been lost of that unmeasured deposit, which, from Adam downwards to the last elect, has accumulated in his keeping.

Oh, that we all had the persuasion of St. Paul! rather—oh, that we all, like the apostle, would resign ourselves to Christ. *Able to save to the uttermost, Lord, to whom shall we go; thou hast the words of eternal life.* Thou who hast abolished death, upon whom else shall we suspend our immortality? Thou who hast spoiled principalities

and powers, whom else shall we take as our champion? whom else confide in as our protector? May God, by his Spirit, lead you all to the one Mediator between God and men,—the man Christ Jesus: and may we all be enabled so completely to resign ourselves into the hands of Christ, that we may look forward without dread to the hour of our departure; assured that those black and cold waters which roll in upon the dying shall sweep nothing away out of the watchfulness of our guardian; but just bearing us within the sphere of his peculiar inspections, give us up to his care as children of the resurrection,—as heirs of that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled.



# SERMON I.

## JACOB'S VISION AND VOW.

“And he dreamed, and beheld a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”—Genesis, 28 : 12.

It is the registered saying of a man, eminent alike for talent and piety, that he had never found such strong arguments against the Bible, in the writings of infidels, as had suggested themselves to his own mind. We are inclined to suppose that this individual expressed what many have experienced. We can readily believe that doubts and difficulties will occasionally be presented to those who read the sacred volume as the word of God, which never meet the sceptical, who read only that they may object. There would be nothing to surprise us, if such could be proved generally the fact. Where there is a spiritual perception, apparent inconsistencies with the divine character will be more readily detected, than where there is a decided aversion to all that is holy. It should moreover be remembered, that Satan has a great deal to do with the injecting sceptical thoughts into the mind: and we may fairly expect that he will so proportion his attack to its subject, as to suggest the strongest arguments where there is most to overcome. The man who is studying the Bible with the express design of proving it a forgery, will have little assistance, as it were, from Satan, in prosecuting the attempt: he already disbelieves the Bible, and this is enough for our great adversary, the devil. But the man, on the contrary, who is studying the Bible as an inspired book, will be continually beset, and vehemently assaulted, by Satan. There is here a great object to be gained, the shaking his confidence in the divine origin of Scripture; and it may, therefore, well be expected that the devil will exert all his ingenuity in devising, and all his

earnestness in suggesting objections.

We do not intend to follow out the train of thought thus opened before you. We have made these remarks as introductory to one which you may have often made for yourselves, namely, that sceptics, as though blinded and bewildered, frequently adduce, as arguments against the Bible, what are really arguments in its favor. For example, how constantly and eagerly are the faults and crimes of the Old Testament saints brought forward, and commented on! In how triumphant a tone is the question proposed, Could these have been men “after God’s own heart?” Yet certainly it does not need much acuteness to discover, that the recording these faults and crimes is an evidence of the truth of Holy Writ. A mere human biographer, anxious to pass off his hero as specially in favor with God, would not have ascribed to him actions which a righteous God must both disapprove and punish. Every writer of common discernment must have foreseen the objections which such ascriptions would excite: if, therefore, he had been only inventing a tale, he would have avoided what was almost sure to bring discredit on the narrative. So that there is a manifestation of honesty in the register given of the sins of such men as Abraham, and Jacob, and David, which should make sceptics pause, ere they seize on that register as an argument against Scripture.

Besides, had holy men of old been exhibited as faultless, there would have been much to make us doubt whether the history were faithful, and much to discourage us in our strivings after

righteousness. There has been but one perfect character amongst men, the Lord Jesus Christ; and of him is nothing recorded which goes not to the proving that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." All others have done much which ought not to have been done, and left undone much which ought to have been done. And though we take no pleasure in the faults of others, we may yet declare it satisfactory to know that those who have entered heaven, were not perfect in their day and generation; that, like ourselves, they were "compassed with infirmities," often assaulted, and often overcome by temptation.

But there is yet more to be said in regard to the registered sins of men who were distinguished by the favor of God. The infidel would have something like a fair ground of objection, if he could prove that sins were allowed to be committed with impunity. If, for example, he could show that David was visited with no chastisement for the heinous sins of murder and adultery, it would not be without reason that he impugned the sacred narrative, as at variance with the known principles of God's moral government. But if, after the perpetration of these crimes, the days of the king of Israel were days, according to the scriptural representations, of unvaried trouble and distress, it cannot be said that the crimes entailed no punishment, and that therefore the history is opposed to what we know of God's retributive dealings. Thus again, in reference to the transactions with which our text stands associated. It is impossible to justify Rebekah and Jacob in the deceit which they practised upon Isaac, that they might divert from Esau the blessing of the first-born. Jacob, as you will remember, prompted by his mother Rebekah, disguised himself in the raiment of his elder brother Esau, and thus imposed on his father Isaac, whose eyes were dim with age. The infidel urges rightly, that there was great wickedness in this; but he argues wrongly, that, since Jacob succeeded in his fraud, God is represented as sanctioning villainy. The whole history, on the contrary, is full of witness of God's retributive justice. Isaac had sinned greatly in designing to give Esau the bless-

ing of the first born: he knew that God had promised it to Jacob, and he was therefore attempting to set aside the Divine purpose and decree. And God not only frustrated the attempt, but in such manner as signally to punish the patriarch. Isaac is deceived by his own wife and son, and thus chastised with a chastisement which must have been specially grievous. Rebekah, too, and Jacob, they both greatly offended by using an unlawful mode of preventing an unlawful design. But if both offended, both were punished. Jacob was the favorite son of Rebekah; and it may have been a mother's fondness which moved her to secure for him, at all hazards, the blessing. But if she thought that the success of her plan would increase her happiness, she was greatly disappointed. The immediate consequence of her success was, that Jacob had to flee from his father's house, and become a sojourner in a strange land. And he returned not, as it would seem, to his home, until his mother was dead; so that Rebekah saw not again the son of her affections. He were a strange calculator, who should say that the mother went unpunished for her sin, when, as its direct consequence, her child was torn from her embrace, and not restored to it on this side the grave. And as to Jacob, he indeed gained the blessing; and, since that blessing had been promised him by God, he would have equally gained it had he left God to secure the fulfilment of his own word. But he was impatient and fearful; he used fraud where he should have exercised faith; and, therefore, though the blessing was obtained, it brought with it sorrow and affliction. The present advantage was wholly on the side of Esau. Esau remained in his father's house, in the undisturbed enjoyment of its comfort and abundance. But Jacob is a wanderer: we find him, as described in the chapter from which our text is taken, an outcast and a fugitive, with no couch but the ground, and no pillow but the stones. Yea, and in his after life how signally did the even-handed justice of the Almighty return to him the anguish which he had caused to others. Deceived by Laban, who gave him Leah, in place of Rachel on whom his affections were set, he was partially requited for imposing



upon Isaac. But this was little; the recompense came not yet up to the offence. His own children deceive him, as he had deceived his father, and cheat him into a belief that Joseph is dead. And he must mourn for Joseph, even as Rebekah had mourned for himself, and be separated from him through many weary years. Let any one read attentively the history of Jacob, and observe how family troubles and sorrows continually harassed him; and he will not, we think, contend that the patriarch went unpunished for the fraud which he had practised on Isaac.

We are now, however, specially concerned with what happened to Jacob, as he fled from the face of his brother Esau; we wave, therefore, further reference to other portions of his history. We have already said, that, in the chapter before us, we find him a wanderer, hurrying, in fear of his life, to his mother's kinsman in Haran. But though Jacob had sinned, and was now undergoing the punishment of his sin, God would not abandon him, nor leave him without some encouraging manifestation. Jacob was to be the depository of the promises of God, and through him was the line of the Messiah to be continued. It had been declared to Abraham, that in his seed, which was Isaac, should all nations be blessed; and of the two sons of Isaac, God chose the younger to be the ancestor of Christ. And now, when Jacob might be almost tempted to think that there was no worth in the blessing, or that, because gained by fraud, it was not ratified in heaven, God is graciously pleased to vouchsafe him a vision, and thus to keep him from despair whilst suffering just punishment. The vision greatly cheered the wanderer; and, whilst it filled him with apprehensions of the majesty of God, excited in him feelings of gratitude and devotedness. He accordingly vowed a vow, strongly indicative, as we think, of a lowly and thankful spirit, though many have endeavored to prove from it that the patriarch's religion was but selfish and time-serving. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." It is our

wish, on the present occasion, to consider, with due attention, both the vision and the vow. The vow must be regarded as marking the effect which the vision had produced on the mind of the patriarch, and therefore ought not to be excluded from our subject-matter of discourse: so that we have to engage you with examining, in the first place, the vision with which Jacob was favored, when on his way to Padanaram; and in the second place, the vow through which he expressed the consequent feelings and workings of his mind.

Now the vision is related in our text, and the three following verses. A ladder is beheld, planted on the earth, but reaching up to heaven. Above this ladder the Lord is seen to stand, and he addresses Jacob in most encouraging words. He declares that the land on which he lay, a fugitive and an exile, should yet be given to himself and his posterity, and that his children should be multiplied as the dust of the earth. The promise made to Abraham is then solemnly renewed: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Jacob is thus assured that he had indeed obtained the blessing of the first-born, and that from his loins was to spring the great Deliverer of humankind. There are added general declarations that he should be under the guardianship of God in his absence from his home; and then the vision is at an end, and Jacob awakes, and expresses a kind of awful conviction that the Lord was in that place, and he knew it not.

Now our great object is to ascertain the intent of the vision: for we may be sure that the ladder, which thus reached from earth to heaven, and along which ascended and descended the angels of God, was emblematic of some truth with which it was important that Jacob should be acquainted. We are all aware, that, under the patriarchal dispensation, lessons of the greatest moment were given through significant representations. We may suppose that the Spirit of God instructed those favored with this mystical revelation, so that they were enabled to detect the meaning symbolically conveyed. It was not consistent with the plan of God's dealings with this earth, that clear and

undisguised notices should be given of redemption, whilst the time of the Redeemer's appearance was yet far removed. But neither would it have consisted with the divine mercy, that the patriarchs should have been left wholly ignorant of the deliverance to be wrought out in the fulness of time, or with no information but that derived from early tradition. And in order to answer both these ends, the keeping the plan concealed, and yet the making its nature sufficiently known, God was pleased to vouchsafe visions, and command typical actions, by and through which, as we have reason to believe, he communicated to his saints such portions of truth as it most concerned them to know. There seems no reason to doubt, that Abraham's offering up his son was a significative transaction, appointed and employed by God to teach the father of the faithful how the world would be redeemed. It is probable also that Jacob's wrestling with an angel, on the night which preceded his meeting with Esau, was an instance of information by action, the patriarch being hereby taught generally what prevalence earnest prayer has with God, and assured moreover of the happy issue of the dreaded interview of the morrow. We think it fair to suppose, that, in like manner, the vision granted to Jacob, as he fled from his home, was designed to represent some great spiritual truth, and was itself a revelation of some portion of the purposes of God. If nothing had been intended beyond the assuring Jacob of divine favor and protection, the ladder, with its attendant circumstances, seems unnecessarily introduced; for the words, spoken by God, would have sufficed to console and animate the wanderer. It is, therefore, in strict conformity with the general character of the patriarchal dispensation, and in accordance with the peculiar circumstances of Jacob, that we should suppose the vision itself emblematical, so that, over and above the encouraging things which were said, there was a great truth taught by that which was seen. Hence the question now is, as to the meaning of the vision itself, as to the truths represented by the mystical ladder.

It has often been affirmed, that nothing more was designed than the in-

forming Jacob of the ever-watchful providence of the Almighty. We are not prepared to deny that the image of a ladder, reaching from earth to heaven, God himself appearing at its top, and angels passing up and down in rapid succession, may be accommodated to the workings of Divine providence; inasmuch as a constant communication is thus represented as kept up between this globe and higher places in creation, and God is exhibited as carrying on, through the instrumentality of angels, unwearied intercourse with the human population. And yet, at the same time, we feel that the figure, if this be its import, scarcely seems distinguished by the aptness and force which are always characteristic of scriptural imagery. The ladder appears to mark an appointed channel of communication: it can hardly be said to mark that universal inspection of the affairs of this earth, and that universal care of its inhabitants, which we are accustomed to understand by the providence of God. Besides, as we have already intimated, if the vision taught nothing but that Jacob was the object of divine watchfulness and protection, it did not add to the declarations with which it was accompanied; and the patriarch could gather no truth from what he saw, which he might not have equally gathered from what he heard. And this, to say the least, is not usual in God's recorded dealings with his people: certainly, every part of these dealings is generally significative, and none can be shown to have been superfluous.

We seem bound, therefore, to apply the vision to other truths besides that of the providence of God. And when you observe, that one great object of the celestial manifestation was the renewing with Jacob the promise made to Abraham and Isaac, you will be quite prepared to expect in the vision a revelation of the Messiah himself. Jacob had just secured the distinction of being the progenitor of Christ; and God is about to assure him, in the words of the original covenant with his fathers, that in his seed should all nations be blessed. How natural then that some intelligence should be communicated in regard of the Christ, so that, whilst the patriarch knew himself



the depository of that grand promise in which the whole world had interest, he might also know, so far as consisted with an introductory dispensation, what the blessings were which the promise insured. It must be fair to suppose that what Jacob saw had an intimate connection with what he heard, and that the vision was intended, either to illustrate, or be illustrated by, the subsequent discourse. But there is nothing in the discourse, except that promise which had reference to Christ, on which it can be said that obscurity rests. The other parts have to do with that guardianship, of which Jacob should be the object, and with the greatness of that nation, of which he should be the ancestor. Hence the likelihood, if we may not use a stronger expression, is considerable, that the vision should be associated with the promise of the Christ; and that, as the one assured Jacob that the Mediator should arise from his line, the other emblematically informed him of this Mediator's person and work.

We would add to this, that our Saviour, in his conversation with Nathanael, used language which seems undoubtedly to refer to the mystic ladder on which the patriarch gazed. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Here the Redeemer appears to identify himself, as the Son of Man, with the ladder: the angels are to ascend and descend on the one, even as they did on the other. We may find occasion, in the sequel, to recur to this saying of Christ, and to examine it more at length. At present, we simply adduce it as corroborating the opinion, that the ladder represented the Mediator; and that, as Abraham had been symbolically taught that the world should be redeemed through the sacrifice of a substitute, so was Jacob now symbolically instructed in regard of that substitute's nature and dignity.

But, of course, the great point remains yet to be examined, namely, whether the vision in question furnished an accurate representation of the promised deliverer. And here we affirm at once, that, if the ladder seen by Jacob be regarded as a type of the

Mediator, there is an appositeness in the figure which must commend itself to all thinking minds. Cut off by apostasy from all intercourse with what is yet glorious and undefiled in the universe, the human race lies naturally in wretchedness and loneliness; and, though it may cast eager looks at the bright heaven which is above, has no means of holding communion with the tenants, or gaining admission to the gladness, of domains which may be privileged with special manifestations of Deity. Who of all our fallen line, is possessed of a power, or can frame an engine, through which he may ascend from a planet which labors beneath the provoked curse of God, and climb the battlements of the sky, and achieve entrance into the city, into which is to enter nothing that defileth? Who is there, if the Almighty had dealt with this world according to its iniquities, and left it in the ruin threatened to transgression, that could have so found out God by the might of his reason, and so propitiated him by the might of his virtue, as to have renewed the broken friendship between the human and the divine, and opened a clear way for the passage of the earthly to the heavenly? All of you, if believers in revelation, know and admit that the direct consequence of our forefather's sin was the suspension of all intercourse, except that carried on through the ministry of vengeance, between God and man. Up to the moment of rebellion there had been free communion: earth and heaven seemed connected by a path which the very Deity loved to traverse; for he came down to the garden where our first parents dwelt, and held with them most intimate converse. But, in rebelling, man broke up, as it were, this path, rendering it impracticable that any should escape from the heritage on which evil had gained footing, and mount to bright lands where all was yet pure. And we know of no more striking and accurate representation of the condition of our race, in its alienation from God; than that which should picture the earth as suddenly deprived of every channel of communication with other sections of the universe, so that it must wander on in appalling solitariness, a prison-

house from which nothing human could soar, and which nothing divine could visit. Ay, this was the earth, so soon as Satan had seduced man from allegiance; a lonely thing, which had snapped every link which bound it to what was holy and happy in creation: and, as it bore along the lost children of Adam, they might have gazed wistfully on lands just visible in the firmament, and which they knew to be radiant with the presence of their Maker: but where was the way across the vast expanse, where the mechanism by which they might scale the inaccessible heights?

And undoubtedly, if it be a just representation of our race, in its fallen estate, that it is cut off from all intercourse with God, and all access to heaven, it must be a just representation of the Mediator, that he is the channel through which the lost communion may be renewed, the way through which the lost paradise may be re-entered. The world has not been left in its solitariness: for God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son;" and through him we have "access to the Father." We are not forced to remain in our exile and wretchedness: for Christ hath declared, "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Yea, we can now thank the "Lord of heaven and earth," that the broken links have been repaired, so that the severed parts of creation may be again bound into one household; that a highway has been thrown up, along which the weary and heavy-laden may pass to that rest which remaineth for the people of God. But it is only telling you truths, with which we may hope that the very youngest are acquainted, to tell you that it is Christ alone by whom all this has been effected, Christ alone through whom we can approach God, Christ alone through whom we can enter the kingdom of heaven. And what then more accurate than a delineation, which should represent the Mediator under the image of a ladder, based on earth, but reaching to heaven, and thus affording a medium of communication between God and man? Oh, as Jacob lay upon the ground, an exile from his father's house, and without a friend or companion, he was not an inappropri-

ate figure of the human race, forced away by sin from the presence of their Maker, and with no associates to aid by their counsel, and cheer by their sympathy. And when, in visions of the night, there rose before the patriarch the appearance as of a ladder, planted on the earth, but its top resting on the firmament, then, may we affirm, was there given to the wanderer the strongest assurance, that God would yet provide means for raising the ruined from degradation, and gathering into his own dwelling-place the banished and fallen. When, moreover, this expressive emblem of renewed intercourse between earth and heaven was accompanied by the voice of the living God, making mention of the deliverer in whom the world should be blessed, then might it be declared that the revelation was complete, and that through the mystic ladder was the Gospel preached to Jacob; for in this figure he could read that the seed of the woman would be the Mediator between God and man, "the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in," and who, as "the way, the truth, and the life," would "open the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

But it is necessary that we go somewhat more into particulars: hitherto we have only spoken of Christ in his mediatorial office, without referring to the mysteries of his person. The emblem, however, of the ladder is accurate in regard of the person, as well as the work, of the Redeemer. As the ladder stretched into the heavens, and the very Deity occupied its summit, so Christ, in his divine nature, penetrated immensity, and was one with the Father. And as the ladder, though its top was on the sky, was set upon the earth, so Christ, though essentially God, took upon him flesh, and was "found in fashion as a man." The ladder would be useless, if it rested not on the ground, or if it reached not to the sky: and thus, had not Christ been both earthly and heavenly, both human and divine, he could not have been the Mediator, through whom the sinful may approach, and be reconciled to their Maker. As God appeared standing above the ladder, looking down with complacency on his servant, and addressing him in gracious and encouraging



words, so it is only in and through Christ that the Father beholds us with favor, and speaks to us the language of forgiveness and friendship. In respect, moreover, of the angels, who were seen ascending and descending on the ladder, we cannot doubt that these celestial beings, though they now attend us as ministering spirits, would have held no communication with our race, had it remained unredeemed. We know that God is spoken of by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, as "gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him;" and again, in his Epistle to the Colossians, as "by him reconciling all things to himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." And it is evidently the drift of such expressions, that, by and through the mediation of Christ, the fellowship of the human race with other orders of being was to be restored, and men and angels were to be brought into association. Indeed we know ourselves indebted to the Mediator for every blessing: if, therefore, we regard angels as "the ministers of God which do his pleasure," and through whose instrumentality he carries on designs, whether of Providence or of grace, we must feel sure that we owe it exclusively to Christ, that these glorious creatures are busied with promoting our welfare. And if then the continued descent and ascent of the angels mark, as we suppose it must, their coming down on commissions in which men have interest, and their returning to receive fresh instructions, there is peculiar fitness in the representation of their ascending and descending by a ladder which is figurative of Christ: it is a direct result of Christ's mediation, that angels are sent forth as "ministering spirits, to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation;" and if then a ladder, reaching from earth to heaven, be a just emblem of the Savior, it is in the nicest keeping with this emblem, that, up and down the ladder, should be rapidly passing the cherubim and the seraphim.

We would further observe that some writers appear anxious to prove, that the appearance, which the patriarch saw, was not precisely that of a ladder, but probably that of a pyramid, or pil-

lar. There is a want of dignity, they think, in the image of a ladder, and they would therefore substitute a more imposing. But though many of the same truths might be taught, if there were the supposed change in the emblem, we are no ways affected by the homeliness of the figure, but think, on the contrary, that it adds to its fitness. It was the declaration of prophecy in regard to the Christ, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." And, therefore, if he is to be delineated as connecting earth and heaven, we should expect the image to be that of a ladder, a common instrument with nothing of the grand and attractive, rather than of a splendid tower, such as that of Babel, which men themselves would delight to rear, and, when reared, to admire. Besides, however we would avoid the straining a type, we own that the representation of Christ, under the figure of a ladder, appears to us to include the most exact references to the appointed mode of salvation. How do I look to be saved? by clinging to Christ. How do I expect to ascend up to heaven? by mounting, step by step, the whole height of Christ's work, so that he is made unto me of God, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." It is no easy thing, the gaining eternal life through the finished work of the Mediator. It is a vast deal more than the sitting with the prophet in his car of fire, and being borne aloft, without effort, to an incorruptible inheritance. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There must be, if we may thus express it, a holding fast to Christ, and a climbing up by Christ: to look back is to grow dizzy, to let go is to perish. And that we are to mount by the Mediator, and, all the while, to keep hold on the Mediator; that we are, in short, to ascend by successive stages, stretching the hand to one line after another in the work of the Redeemer, and planting the foot on one step after another in the covenant made with us in Christ—what can more aptly exhibit this, than the exhibiting Christ as a ladder, set upon the earth that men may scale the heavens? The necessity for our own striving, and yet the use-

lessness of that striving if not exerted in the right manner; the impossibility of our entering heaven except through Christ, and the equal impossibility of our entering it, without effort and toil; the fearful peril of our relaxing, for an instant, our spiritual vigilance and earnestness, seeing that we hang, as it were, between earth and heaven, and may be thrown, by a moment's carelessness, headlong to the ground; the completeness and singleness of the salvation which is in Jesus, so that, if we adhere to it, it is sufficient, but there are no modes which meet in it, or branch off from it—swerve a single inch, and you have no footing, but must be hopelessly precipitated; all these particulars seem indicated under the imagery of a ladder, and could not perhaps have been equally marked, had some other emblem been given of the connecting of earth and heaven by the Mediator, Christ. And now, as I stand upon the earth, the child of a fallen and yet redeemed race, and examine how I may escape the heritage of shame which is naturally my portion, and soar to that sky which woos me by its brightness, oh, I read of "entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," and of "laying hold upon the hope set before us," and of "following on to know the Lord," and of being "raised up, and being made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ,"—expressions which prove to me, that, if I would reach heaven, it must be through fastening myself to the Mediator, and yet straining every nerve to leave the world behind; leaning incessantly upon Christ, and yet laboring to diminish by successive steps my distance from God; being always "found in Christ," and yet "led by the Spirit," so as to be always on the advance. But when I consider these scriptural combinations of believing and working, trusting in another and laboring for one's self, always having hold on Christ, and always mounting to greater nearness to God, always supported by the same suretyship and always pressing upward to the same point, I seem to have before me the exact picture of a man, who, with a steady eye, and a firm foot, and a stanch hand, climbs by a ladder some mighty precipice: he could make no way, whatever his striv-

ings, without the ladder, and the ladder is utterly useless without his own strivings. May we not, therefore, contend, that, through the vision vouchsafed to the patriarch Jacob, God not only revealed the person and work of the Mediator, but gave information, and that too in no very equivocal shape, how the working out salvation will be combined with the being saved "freely through the redemption that is in Christ," whenever any of the children of men are raised from earth, and elevated to heaven?

But it will be right that, before leaving this portion of our subject, we recur to our Lord's speech to Nathanael, which has already been quoted. It is easy to decide that Christ designed a reference to Jacob's vision, but not to determine the precise meaning of his words. "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." The words are prophetic, but there is nothing to inform us what time may be intended by "hereafter." We cannot, however, but think, that however ingenious may be the interpretations which authors have advanced, nothing has yet happened which quite fulfils the prophecy.\* We doubt whether there were any occurrences, during Christ's residence on earth, which could be said to bring to pass the visible opening of heaven, and the ascent and descent of angels on the Mediator. Christ had not indeed wrought miracles, when he held his interview with Nathanael; and he may have referred to the demonstrations of almighty power, which he was about to put forth, and which would as much prove his divine majesty, as though he were surrounded with troops of angels. But it can hardly be said that such an explanation as this is commensurate with the passage. We know not what to call far-fetched, if we may not so designate the statement, that those who saw Christ work miracles, saw heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Savior. We may add that there were circumstances attending the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, which may be considered as having partially accomplish-

\* See King's Morsels of Criticism.



ed the words under review. Angels appeared in connection with these several events, and the firmament was at length opened to receive the ascending conqueror. But here we must again say, that the interpretation comes manifestly so far short of the scope of the passage, that nothing but inability to find another meaning can make us content with one so contracted.

For our own part, then, we cannot but believe that the prophecy has not yet received its full accomplishment. We refer it onward to times, of which indeed our apprehensions are indistinct, but not on that account less animating. We have abundant reason for believing that days are to break on this creation, such as have never yet visited it since man rebelled against his Maker. We read of "new heavens and a new earth," as though the whole material system were to be splendidly renovated, and of the creature itself also being "delivered from the bondage of corruption," as though animate and inanimate were to reach one general jubilee. And when there shall have been effected this magnificent rebuilding of all that has been shattered, this hanging with new majesty, and enamelling with fresh beauty, the creation wherein we dwell; and when, in its every department, our globe shall be tenanted by "a holy priesthood, a peculiar people;" then, for any thing we can tell, may such intercourse be opened between the earth and other sections of the universe, as shall give an ampler meaning than has yet been imagined to the vision of Jacob, and the words of Christ. It is a fine saying of the Psalmist, "God setteth the solitary in families." And it may be one of the verifications of this saying, that worlds which have hitherto moved, each in its own orbit, each left in its solitariness, shall have channels of communication the one with the other, so that one mighty family shall be formed of orders of being which have never yet been brought into visible association. We cannot pretend to speak with any certainty of events and times, of which we have only obscure intimations. But at least, unable as we are to apply the words under review to any thing that has already occurred, we may lawfully connect them with what is yet future,

and, by associating them with other predictions, gain and give additional illustration. And by following this plan in the present instance, we seem warranted in stating the high probability, that, in glorious days when Christ's kingdom will be visibly reared on the wreck of human sovereignty, there will be open and brilliant intercourse between dwellers on this earth and higher ranks of intelligence. Then may it come to pass that Jacob's ladder will be shown to have represented the bringing into blessed communion all the ends of creation; and then may the Mediator, in some manner unimaginable now, appear as the channel through which communion is maintained. Ay, and then, in some stupendous unveiling of the secrets of the universe, and in some sublime manifestation of himself as the connecting link between all departments of the unlimited household, may Christ explain, and make good, the yet mysterious saying, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

But we turn now from the vision to the vow of Jacob; from the considering what the patriarch saw and heard, to the examining the effect thereby wrought upon his mind. We have no intention of entering at length into all that is related of the conduct of Jacob, when he awaked out of sleep. We wish to confine ourselves strictly to his vow; for it is against this that objections have been urged by infidel writers. Jacob sets up for a pillar the stone which had served him as a pillow; and, having poured oil upon it, so as to dedicate it to God, vows a vow—"if God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." He adds—but it is not necessary that we touch on this—that the erected stone should be the house of the Lord, and that, of all which God gave him, he would consecrate the tenth.

Now it is urged that there is something very mercenary and selfish in this: Jacob is represented as making a kind of bargain with God, so that he will serve him only on condition of a

recompense. If my bodily wants be all supplied, the Lord shall be my God; as much as to say, if I am left in destitution, I will abandon all religion. We hold it exceedingly unfair and disingenuous thus to wrest Jacob's vow. We are sure that no candid mind can put on it the interpretation that Jacob was a time-server, careful of religion only so far as it seemed likely to promote his temporal interests. On the contrary, we are persuaded that, if you consider the vow without prejudice, you will find it expressive of great humility and gratitude. God had just entered into covenant with Jacob, engaging to bestow privileges which would make him conspicuous amongst men. God had just told him, that the land on which he lay should become the inheritance of himself and his children; and, as though this were little, that in him, and in his seed, should all families of the earth be blessed. Jacob was thus assured that he should be the father of a great nation, yea, and that from him should descend the Benefactor and Redeemer of mankind. These were splendid promises; we could scarcely have marvelled, had the patriarch, on awaking from his sleep, manifested great elation of mind at the dignities to which he was appointed. Knowing how difficult it is to bear greatness meekly, we could not have wondered had he vowed as his vow. If indeed God will accomplish his word, and bestow on me the things of which he has spoken, I will take him as my God, and serve him faithfully all the days of my life. And had this been Jacob's vow, there might have been color for the opinion, that the patriarch was mercenary in his religion. Had he made his serving God contingent on his obtaining what would render him mighty and illustrious, it would have been with some show of fairness that men accused his piety of being sordid and selfish. But when, in place of speaking of lordship over the land of Canaan, and of being the ancestor of Messiah, he simply asks for bread to eat, and raiment to put on, the bare necessities of life, with none of its superfluities; those, we think, must be resolved to find fault, who can see in Jacob's conduct the indications of a religion which looked at nothing but

recompense. The only just interpretation which can be put upon his vow, appears to us the following: Jacob is quite overpowered by the manifestations of God's favor, which had just been vouchsafed, and sinks under the sense of his own utter unworthiness. Who is he, a wanderer on account of his sin, that the Almighty should enter into covenant with him, and promise him whatever was most noble in human allotment? Oh, he seems to say, it was not needful that promises such as these should have been made, in order to my feeling bound to the service of God. I am not worthy of the least of all his mercies; and I required not, as I deserved not, the being signalled out from other men, to make me strong in my resolve of obedience. If he will but grant me the commonest food, and the simplest clothing, I shall be satisfied; it will be more than I have a right to ask, and will bind me to him as my maker and benefactor. He has indeed promised to restore me safely to my father's house, so that I shall not perish in the exile which my offence has procured; and if he do this, and thus make good his word, I shall account as nothing the having to struggle with hardship and want; there will be given me a clear token that I am under the protection of an ever-vigilant guardian, and whom but this guardian shall I take for my God?

We have no hesitation in stating that such seems fairly the import of Jacob's vow. Jacob is not, so to speak, bargaining with God: he is only overcome by the display of Divine goodness, and abashed by the consciousness how little it was deserved. Can the vow be called mercenary, when he only asked a bare subsistence, though the promise had included territory and dominion? Jacob, after all, merely asked life; and he asked it merely that he might devote it to God. Does this savor of the spirit of a hireling? Can this be declared indicative of a resolution to treat religion as a mere matter of profit and loss, and to cultivate piety no further than God would give him riches in exchange? We are persuaded that you cannot thus characterize the vow of the patriarch. We stated, indeed, at the commencement of our discourse, that we had right to expect



that the faults of saints would be recorded: if, therefore, the vow of Jacob were what it has been maliciously represented, we should have only to lament another proof of the frailty of the best, and to point out another evidence of the honesty of the historian. But we are not to allow the faults to be exaggerated. When holy men transgressed, and yielded to temptation, it is not for the interest of truth that we should defend or extenuate their conduct. But where the charge against them is disingenuous and unfounded, it is our duty to expose the unfairness of the attack, and vindicate the accused. And men may perversely find, if they will, the marks of a sordid and mercenary temper in the declaration, that Jacob would take the Lord for his God, if he had bread to eat, and raiment to put on: but when the circumstances of the patriarch are taken into account, when what he asks of God is set in contrast with what God had engaged to bestow, candid reasoners must admit that his language is that of humility, rather than of a hireling, and find in it the expression of gratitude and thankfulness, rather than of a covetous and time-serving disposition.

There is but another remark which we would make before winding up our subject of discourse. We learn from such narratives as this of Jacob's vision, how possible it is that the soul may enjoy great happiness, and gain vast accessions of knowledge, in what is called the separate state. It is, you observe, whilst Jacob is asleep, and therefore not to be communicated with through his bodily senses, that God shows him the heavens opened, and speaks to him of great things to come. And this is a fine testimony to the capacity of the soul, when detached from the body, for receiving notices of the invisible world, and holding converse with spiritual beings. When I have laid aside this corruptible flesh, my soul—if indeed I "sleep in Jesus"—will pass into a condition of peace and tranquillity, and there await the trumpet-peal which is to call forth as her residence a glorified body. But there is no necessity that the soul should be inactive, or contracted in her enjoyments, because stripped for a while of material organs. The intermediate state

must indeed be vastly inferior, in all the elements of dignity and happiness, to that which will succeed the general resurrection. Yet it may not be a state of listlessness, nor one whose privilege consists in mere repose. The soul, by her own organs, may gaze on what is glorious, and gather in what is inspiring. For if, whilst the body was wrapped in slumber, and the soul left alone in her wakefulness, Jacob could behold earth linked with heaven, and the bright array of angels, and the majesty of Deity; and hearken to a Divine voice which brought him animating tidings; we may well be persuaded that, when separated from matter by death, our spirits shall be capable of intercourse with God, and of grasping much of the magnificence of the future. If they cannot mount the whole height of the ladder, they may yet look on in its stateliness, and admire the celestial troop by which it is traversed, and receive from the Lord God, the mysterious emblems of whose presence crown its summit, intelligence of the things which the eye hath not seen, and the ear hath not heard.

But now we address you, in conclusion, as beings confined for a while to a narrow and inconsiderable scene, but whose home is far away, in those regions of light where Deity is specially manifested, and where the angel and the archangel have their abode. We point you to the everlasting hills, whose glorious and gold-lit summits come out to the eye of faith from the mighty expanse; and we tell you that those hills must be climbed. We point you to "a city which hath foundations," the "Jerusalem which is above;" we show you its stupendous walls stretching interminably upward; and we tell you that these walls must be scaled. And you are staggered at the greatness of the demand. How can we ascend hills which are not based on this earth; how surmount walls, of which no eye can take the altitude? We lead you with us to Bethel, and bid you behold that on which the patriarch gazed. There is a ladder, set up on the ground, but its top reaches to the summit of the mountain, and to the gate of the city. Are you willing to go up, to leave the prison, and to seek the palace? Then, in the name of the living God, we bid

you plant the foot on the first step of this ladder: forsake evil courses, break away from evil habits, and take part with the disciples of Christ. Christ casteth out none who come unto him: and he who strives to turn from his iniquities at the call of his Savior, is beginning to lay hold on that propitiation, through the grasping of which in its several parts he will be gradually raised to the blessedness of immortality. Are you afraid of trusting yourselves to this ladder? Thousands, in every age, have gone up by it to glory; and not a solitary individual has found it give way beneath him, however immense the burden of his sins. And why afraid? The ladder is He who is "able to save to the uttermost" all who would go unto God through him; and the angels are ascending and descending upon it, for they have charge over the righteous to keep them in all their ways; and the Almighty himself looks down on those who are climbing painfully upwards,

that he may send them succor when the hand is relaxing and the foot falling. I can answer for it, that every one of you may, if he will, mount by this ladder, seeing that Christ took human nature, and thus united earth and heaven, as the substitute of all. I can answer for it, that none who strive to mount by this ladder shall fail of everlasting life; for those who believe on Christ can never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. The canopy of the sky seems lined with the "cloud of witnesses." Those who have gone before are bidding us climb, through the one Mediator, to their lofty abode. We come, we come. Your call shall be obeyed. Your voices animate us, as they steal down in solemn and beautiful cadence. And God helping, there shall not be one of us who does not seek salvation through the blood and righteousness of Jesus; not one who shall not share with you the throne and the diadem.

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## SERMON II.

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### THE CONTINUED AGENCY OF THE FATHER AND THE SON.

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"But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."—St. John, 5: 17.

It is a very peculiar argument which Christ here employs, to disprove the charge of having broken the Sabbath. We will refer, for a few moments, to the context, that you may understand the drift and force of the reasoning. Christ had healed the impotent man, who had lain for a long time by the pool of Bethesda. He had bidden him take up his bed, and walk; and the cripple was immediately enabled to obey the command. It was on the Sabbath-day that this great miracle was wrought; and the circumstance of the

man's carrying his bed through the streets, attracted the notice of those who were jealous for the ceremonial law. They taxed the man with doing what it was not lawful to do on the Sabbath: he justified himself by pleading the direction of the Being by whom he had been healed. This led to an inquiry as to the author of the miracle; and so soon as the Jews had ascertained that it was Jesus, they persecuted him, and "sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath-day." In order to show them the



unreasonableness of their conduct, and to prove that he had authority for what he had done, Christ made use of the words of our text, words by which he seemed to the Jews to claim essential Divinity, however modern objectors may fail to find in them such assumption. You read that, so soon as Christ had said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," his enemies took a new ground for seeking his death. "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

It is very observable, that the Jews considered Christ as claiming actual equality with God—a plain indication, we think, that such was the meaning which his words bore. The contemporaries of the Savior, addressed by him in their native tongue, were more likely to perceive the true sense of what he said than ourselves, who receive his discourses in a dead language. At all events, supposing that the Jews mistook his meaning, what can be said of his not correcting the mistake? So soon as he knew that they were enraged at him for a supposed violation of the Sabbath, he entered on his vindication, and sought to prove the charge groundless. But did he do any thing similar when he knew himself accused of "making himself equal with God?" The charge was far heavier. If Christ had been only a creature, a mere man like one of ourselves, it would have been nothing short of blasphemy had he proclaimed himself "equal with God." We may be sure, therefore, that if the Jews had been wrong in inferring from Christ's words a claim to divinity, they would not have been suffered to continue in error. We may be sure, we say, of this; for even those who are most earnest in contending that Christ was only man, allow that he was a good man, and no deceiver: they are not ready to accuse him of uttering blasphemy, or of being wholly indifferent as to what construction might be put upon his words. Yet it is very certain, that, when Christ knew himself charged with making himself "equal with God," he attempted no denial, but spake in terms which must have confirmed the Jews in the inference which they had

drawn from our text. We find him immediately afterwards saying, "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise,"—words which, in place of contradicting the supposition that he meant to declare himself every way divine, admit no consistent interpretation, unless the power of the Son be precisely the same with that of the Father. And thus it would appear, either that it was a true inference which the Jews drew from our text, when they concluded that Christ affirmed himself equal with God; or that Christ, when he knew the interpretation put upon his words, took no pains to defend himself against the charge of blasphemy, but made statements which rather went to prove the charge just.

We do not well see how the deniers of Christ's divinity are to extricate themselves from this dilemma. The Redeemer had used words, which the Jews interpreted into a claim of equality with God. The interpretation was either correct or incorrect. If correct, Christ meant to declare himself divine, and there can be no debate that he actually was. If incorrect, then Christ, who was not silent under a charge of Sabbath-breaking, would not have been silent under a charge of the worst possible blasphemy: at least, he would not have countenanced the charge, by using more of the same suspicious language. Hence the only fair conclusion seems to be, that the Jews had put the right construction on our text; and that Christ actually designed to assert his proper deity, when, in order to prove that he had not broken the Sabbath by healing on that day, he said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Indeed we know not what force there would be in the argument, on any supposition but that of Christ's being equal with God. The accusation against Christ was, that he had broken the Sabbath by working a miracle. How does he meet the charge? Simply by saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." But what answer, what apology is this! There is an answer, and there is an apology, on the supposition that Christ was God, but not on any other. God, though he had ceased from creating, was continually occupied in sustaining and preserving, so

that he performed works of mercy on the Sabbath-day, as well as on every other, making his sun to shine on the evil and the good, and his rain to descend on the just and the unjust. And if Christ were God, then, in curing the impotent man on the Sabbath, he had only exercised the prerogative of Deity, and continued what had been his practice from the very beginning of the world. The Jews, therefore, might as well have objected, that God brake his own ordinance by those actings of his providence which took place without respect of days, as that Christ had violated the Sabbath by healing the sick. But if Christ were not God, we know not what right he had to refer to what God did, and thereby to attempt his own vindication. Unquestionably, the practice of the Creator could not rightly be quoted in proof, that a mere creature might do what he thought fit on the Sabbath: it did not follow that because the Creator worked on the Sabbath, the creature might lawfully work: this would be placing the creature on a level with the Creator; for it would be claiming the same privileges for the two, the same superiority to all authority and command. But if Christ were more than a creature, if he were himself the Creator, the argument was strong and conclusive: in healing the sick, he did but assert the independence which belonged to him as God, and act as he had all along acted, whilst busied with upholding the universe. Thus the Jews attached to Christ's words the only meaning which, we think, they will bear, when considered as furnishing the reason why he might lawfully cure on the Sabbath. The reason was, that, being himself God, he might act as God, and therefore work on all days alike. But the moment you throw doubt on the fact of his being God, the reason disappears, and our text contains only the presumptuous, and even blasphemous insinuations, that a creature might lawfully guide himself by the actions of the Creator, without regard to his positive commands.

But we will not insist at greater length on the argument furnished by our text and its context in support of the divinity of Christ. We have probably said enough to convince you, that this argument is of more than common

strength; inasmuch as, in interpreting the passage as containing a claim to divinity, we advance only the interpretation which was put upon it by the Jews, and which Christ allowed to pass without censure, nay, which he even confirmed by his subsequent discourse. We will now, however, wave further reference to the circumstances which occasioned the delivery of the text; and, assuming your belief in that fundamental article of christianity, the divinity of Christ, proceed to examine the assertions which are made in regard both of the Father and the Son. We have only to premise, that our Savior must be understood as speaking in his character of Mediator, the being who had united in his person the divine nature and the human. It was not altogether as God, but rather as God-man, that he had healed the cripple, who had vainly waited, year after year, by the pool of Bethesda. The miracles which Jesus wrought were designed as credentials, by which his authority, as a teacher sent from God, might be clearly established. Hence in working a miracle, he is to be considered as acting in his mediatorial capacity, carrying forward that great undertaking on which he had entered so soon as man transgressed. Hence, when he justifies his performing a miracle on the Sabbath, by saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," he is to be regarded as affirming that the mediatorial office had been, and was to be, discharged with that uninterrupted activity which marked the Creator's providential dealings. It might not perhaps have been a sufficient vindication of the act which had excited the anger of the Jews, that he who wrought it was God, and therefore not bound by such an ordinance as that of the Sabbath. Christ had assumed the nature of man, and voluntarily brought himself under the law. It did not, therefore, necessarily follow, that he had a right to do, as man, whatever it was his prerogative to do as God. But as God-man, or Mediator, he might be called on for the same continued exercise of energy as that by which the Creator sustained the work of his hands. And this it is which he must be supposed to affirm—even that, as the Father, as the universal upholder, had been occupied from the first with



providential operations, so had the Son been actively employed from the first in his Mediatorial capacity; and that, in the one instance, as well as in the other, the work proceeded without respect of days.

But this will be better understood as we advance with our discourse. We shall consider the text as affirming, in the first place, the continual working of the Father; in the second place, the continual working of the Son; and we shall strive so to speak of each, as to prove the words "profitable for doctrine, and instruction in righteousness."

Now there is, perhaps, in all of us a tendency to the substituting second causes for the first, to the so dwelling on the laws of matter, and the operations of nature, as to forget, if not deny, the continued agency of God. If our creed were to be gathered from our common forms of speech, it might be concluded that we regarded nature as some agent quite distinct from deity, having its own sphere, and its own powers, in and with which to work. We are wont to draw a line between what we call natural, and what supernatural; assigning the latter to an infinite power, but ascribing the former to ordinary causes, unconnected with the immediate interference of God. But is not our philosophy as defective as our theology, so long as we thus give energy to matter, and make a deity of nature? We do not believe that it would furnish any satisfactory account of the thousand beautiful arrangements, discoverable in the visible creation, to say that matter was endued with certain properties, and placed in certain relations, and then left to obey the laws and perform the revolutions originally impressed and commanded. This is ascribing a permanence, as well as a power, to second causes, for which it seems to us as unscientific as it certainly is unscriptural to contend. We do not indeed suppose that God exerts any such agency as to supersede the laws, or nullify the properties of matter; but we believe that he is continually acting by and through these laws and properties as his instruments, and not that these laws and properties are of themselves effecting the various occurrences in the material world. What is that nature, of which we rashly speak,

but the Almighty perpetually at work? What are those laws of matter, to which we confidently appeal, and by which we explain certain phenomena, but so many manifestations of infinite power and intelligence, proofs of the presence and activity of a being who produces, according to his own will, "All action and passion, all permanence and change?"\* I count it not owing to inherent powers, originally impressed, that year by year this globe walks its orbit, repeating its mysterious march round the sun in the firmament: I rather reckon that the hand of the Almighty perpetually guides the planet, and that it is through his energies, momentarily applied, that the ponderous mass effects its rotations. I do not believe it the result of properties, which, once imparted, operate of themselves, that vegetation goes forward, and verdure mantles the earth: I rather believe that Deity is busy with every seed that is cast into the ground, and that it is through his immediate agency that every leaf opens, and every flower blooms. I count it not the consequence of a physical organization, the effect of a curious mechanism, which, once set in motion, continues to work, that pulse succeeds to pulse, and breath follows breath: I rather regard it as literally true, that in God "we live and move, and have our being," that each pulse is but the throb, each breath the inspiration of the ever-present, all-actuating, Divinity.

Away with the idolatry of nature. Nature is but a verbal fiction, invented to keep out of sight the unwearied actings of the great First Cause. The Bible ascribes to God the preservation, and not only the production, of all things. The Levites, when Nehemiah had proclaimed a solemn fast, thus poured forth their confession of the greatness of God, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host; the earth, and all things that are therein; the seas, and all that is therein; and thou *preservest* them all, and the host of heaven worshipeth thee." The Apostle, when preaching the true God to the idolatrous Athenians, declared, "He giveth to all

\* Whewell, Bridgewater Treatise.

life and breath, and all things." There is scarcely a natural production, or occurrence, which we do not find referred, in some part or other of the Bible, immediately to the agency of God. He it is, if we believe the statements of Holy Writ, who maketh the sun to arise, and the rain to descend. He it is, saith the Psalmist, "who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." "He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes." "When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures." These are the terms in which inspired writers speak of the agency of God; terms which seem decisive on the fact, that there is no such thing in the material universe as the working of second causes, without the interference of the first; but that the Divine Being, though he have ceased from creating, is momentarily engaged in actuating and upholding the vast system which he originally constructed. And if, though he have instituted laws, and communicated properties, these laws and properties are but instruments in God's hands, by and through which he effects the results and calls forth the productions which we are wont to refer to natural causes—yea, if each planet, as it turns on its axis and traces out its orbit is moved by his hand; if his breath be in every gale, his glance in every beam, his voice in every sound; if his be the vegetable power which makes the valleys thick with corn, his the pencil which traces beauty on the flowers, his the strength which marshals the elements, his the wisdom which provides for all animated being; who will not own that so universal and uninterrupted an agency is exercised by God, as bears out, in its largest signification, the declaration of Christ, "Hitherto my Father worketh?"

We go on to observe, that it is not only in the material universe that there is the perpetual and immediate agency of God. We know that God has revealed himself as a moral governor, having all orders of intelligent being as his subjects, employing them in his service, and taking cognizance of their actions. And it is a mighty field of employment which is thrown open before

us, when we thus view in God the Governor as well as the Creator. If we limit our thoughts to our own globe and race, how immense is the occupation with which we suppose Deity charged. To observe every motion of the human will, and make it subserve his own purposes; to note whatsoever occurs, and register it for judgment; to instigate to every good action, and overrule every bad,—this is the business, if we may use the word, which belongs to the Moral Governor; a business in which there cannot have been a moment's cessation since the first man was made, and in which there will not be a pause till the last man hath died. You are to add to this, that, with respect to every one of us, the occupation is just as individual as though there were none other upon earth to engage the watchfulness of Deity. "Thou understandest," saith David, "my thought afar off." "There is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?" It is certainly the representation of Scripture; a representation, of which it is hard to say whether it more surprises us by the view which it gives of the unsearchable greatness of God, or delights us by the exquisite tenderness of which it proves us the objects; that no calamity can befall the meanest amongst us, no anxiety disquiet him, no joy cheer him, no prayer escape him, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which he takes no immediate concern. We are directed to ask him for our daily bread; we are bidden to cast all our care upon him; we are assured that he will wipe away our tears; we are told that he is a present help in every time of trouble; that "this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him;" that "he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

We will not now insist on the unmeasured condescension and compassion which such directions and assurances indicate. We wish to fasten your attention on that inconceivably vast employment which is hereby attributed to the Almighty. We are showing you God, as the God of all the families of the earth, exercising over the whole



extent of the human population a watchfulness which nothing can escape, and a carefulness which nothing can weary. He has to give audience every moment to unnumbered beings, who lay before him the expressions of their wants and desires; and every moment he has to minister to the necessities of unnumbered others, who live upon his bounty, and yet yield him no worship. It is not by day alone, it is not by night alone, it is not at stated seasons alone, but perpetually as well as universally, at every instant, in every land, in every household, in every heart, that the Almighty must be busy: busy, wherever there is life, in ministering animation; wherever there is death, in dismissing the spirit; wherever there is righteousness, in producing it; wherever there is wickedness, in controlling it; wherever there is sorrow, wherever there is peace, wherever there is supplication, in sanctifying, bestowing, receiving. We know not where to find terms in which to set forth to you what we may dare to call the industry of Deity. But if you can number the actions which are daily wrought upon the earth, the words which are spoken, the thoughts which are thought, the tears which are shed, the joys which are felt, the wishes which are breathed, then you number the occupations with which this single creation furnishes the Creator; for with every the most minute and insignificant of these he has a close and immediate concern; either causing, or overruling, or moderating, or answering.

And is it not then true that there must be an activity in God, which is, at least, as wonderful as aught else which reason and revelation concur in ascribing to him? We have spoken only of a solitary globe, inhabited by beings who have been made "a little lower than the angels." But there are worlds upon worlds, scattered throughout immensity, each, it may be, the home of life and intelligence. And all that inconceivable employment, which is furnished to God by a single province of his infinite empire, is probably but an inconsiderable fraction of that total of occupation which is devolved upon him as the ruler and upholder of "thrones and dominions, and principalities and powers," the end as well

as the origin of all that is, the guardian, the refuge, the life, of every creature in every spot of unlimited space. The human mind shrinks from the effort to compass the multitudinous transaction. And it is not the business of a day, or a year, or a century. If we follow the leadings of science,—leadings which seem not the less trust-worthy, because only the fragments of a shell, or the footprints of an insect, may have guided her along the path of discovery,—we find dates graven on the visible universe, which seem to prove that, thousands of ages back, in periods too remote for the flight of all but imagination, there were systems and beings to engage the unremitting attention of the Creator; just as, throughout the coming eternity, myriads upon myriads will hang momentarily on his support. Oh, it were to be as God, to comprehend what God has to do! But this we may safely say, that if, as the protector and moral governor of whatsoever he hath formed, the Almighty be observant of all the actions of all his intelligent creatures; if he inspect every heart, record every motive, supply every want, hear every petition, appoint every judgment, employ every instrument,—and this too in every section of an unmeasured dominion,—then all must acknowledge the truth of the simple but sublime statement of Christ, "Hitherto my Father worketh."

We have now, in the second place, to consider what our Savior here affirms of himself: he associates himself with the Father in the perpetual working of which he speaks: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." We may suppose that Christ partly referred to that perfect union of will and operation which subsists among the persons of the Trinity, and which makes them to be not more one in nature than in purpose. When St. Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, had described the Son as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," and had thus assigned him the honors of Godhead, he went on to speak of him as "upholding all things by the word of his power," and thus attributed to him that continued agency on which we have discoursed as characteristic of Deity. It might then

have been a sufficient explanation of our text, if uttered by Christ in his divine capacity, to have referred to that oneness which there is among the persons of the Trinity, and to have concluded from it that "what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." But we have already stated that it was in the discharge of his mediatorial office that Christ had wrought a miracle on the Sabbath; and that it must therefore have been as the Savior, rather than as the Creator of the world, that he spake, when affirming his own continued agency. This opens before us a most interesting truth; for Christ exhibits himself as having been all along occupied with redeeming, just as the Father had been with preserving mankind. In his mediatorial capacity, for in this he now spake, he had not been inactive up to the time of his incarnation, as though, until the Word were made flesh, there had been nothing to be done on behalf of transgressors. On the contrary, there had been the same uninterrupted agency as is exercised by God, as Creator and Governor of the universe, so that the one perpetual action might be paralleled by the other, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

We speak of this as a most interesting, though well-known truth, which it would be for our profit frequently to ponder. It hath pleased God, who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," to place men beneath various dispensations, commanding duties, and enjoining observances peculiar to each. We have but faint traces of patriarchal religion; but we know that, whilst the world was yet young, and evil only of recent introduction, God held intercourse with the fathers of humankind, and instructed them as to the mode in which he would be worshipped. It would seem that he went on revealing his purposes, with greater and greater distinctness, to a favored few, until he separated one people from the rest of the world, and made them the depository of truth. And then he gradually imposed on this people an assemblage of mystical rites, and taught them by a succession of prophets and seers—every instituted ordinance conveying a new lesson, and every inspired messenger adding a fresh leaf to the

volume of knowledge. This dispensation had its period; and then, the fulness of time having at length arrived, the Jewish temple, with its mysterious shadows and sacramental treasures, departed from the scene, and a new order of things was introduced by Christ and his apostles.

To those who take only a cursory survey of the dealings of God, it might seem as though there had been no sameness in these various dispensations, but that different modes of obtaining the divine favor had been prescribed in different ages. They may not perceive that close connection between the patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian religions, that uniformity in the appointed method of salvation, which is apparent on attentive inspection, and affirmed by the whole tenor of the Gospel. There is abundant demonstration, both from express statements of Scripture, and from the nature of each successive dispensation, that, from the first, men recovered the forfeited immortality through the suretyship of the everlasting Word; that, from the first, in every age and every land, it hath been equally true that there "is none other name under heaven," but the name of Jesus Christ, "given among men, whereby we must be saved." There were vast differences in the degrees in which Christ was made known; but, all along, there was but one Savior, and that one, Jesus of Nazareth. The early patriarch, who assembled his family round some rude altar, built at God's command, on the mountain, or in the valley, and there offered the firstlings of his flock; the Jew in Egypt, sprinkling his doorposts with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, or in the wilderness, following the pillar of fire and cloud; his children, settled in Canaan, thronging to a magnificent temple, with the blast of silver trumpets, and the floating of incense, and the pomp of a splendid priesthood,—these were all, notwithstanding the striking differences in external circumstance, seeking the salvation of the soul through the same channel as ourselves, to whom the Gospel is preached in its beauty and fulness. We find it said of Abraham, that he rejoiced to see Christ's day; that he saw it, and was glad. We read of Isaiah, that he "saw Christ's glory, and spake



of him." We are told of Moses, that he "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." And does not St. Peter, speaking of the righteous men who had obtained justification under the law, use this remarkable expression: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they?" an expression which puts it beyond controversy, that, from the earliest days, there had been but one mode of salvation; and that, when there appeared on the earth the "one Mediator between God and man," no new way was opened into the kingdom of heaven; there was only poured a flood of glorious light on the path which had been trodden by good men under every dispensation. It were almost to quote the whole Bible to produce, if we may use such expression, the footprints of a Mediator which are discernible along the line of the patriarchal and legal economy. "To Him give all the prophets witness." He it was whom seers beheld, when the train of future things swept before them in mysterious procession. He died in every sacrifice; he ascended in every cloud of incense; his name was in every jubilee shout; his majesty in the awfulness of the holy of holies.

And if it be true that Christ was a Savior as well before as after his incarnation; that, at the very instant of human apostacy, he entered on his great office; and that he hath labored in its discharge, whensoever there was a soul to be saved; must it not be allowed that there was demanded as uninterrupted an activity from the Redeemer, as from the Upholder and moral Governor of the universe? As soon as there was sin, there was salvation—salvation through Christ. And if there were salvation, there must have been the interference and agency of the Savior, who anticipating his passion and death, must have acted as an advocate with God, presenting the virtues of his own sacrifice, and thus averting from the guilty the doom they had deserved. We know not whether many, or whether only few, were gathered in early days into the kingdom of heaven. But the determining this is not material to our being certified of the incessant occupa-

tion with which the Mediator was charged. Enough that he had to act as Mediator; and we might almost say that he had the same amount of labor, whether men were saved, or whether they perished. Who shall doubt that Christ has toiled for a lost soul, as well as for a rescued—toiling through the striving of his Spirit, and with the shedding of his blood, though he have not won from unrighteousness the being with whom he hath pleaded, and for whom he died? He had been busy, not only with the eight who were enclosed in the ark, but with the thousands upon thousands who wrestled vainly with the deluge. He had been busy, not only with those among the Jews who died in faith, but with the great body of the people, who trusted in ceremonies, and put shadow for substance. He had been busy, not only with this single and isolated nation, but with those vast masses of humankind who had only the feeble notices of truth derivable from tradition and conscience. He had been busy with making men inexcusable, chargeable altogether with their own condemnation, when he could not prevail on them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and give themselves in good earnest to the seeking their God. Thus every human being had furnished employment to the Mediator, as well as to the Creator. The individual had not sprung of Adam's line, who had not drawn the notice, and engaged the operations of the Surety of the fallen, even as he had been watched by the Providence which is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. And, therefore, might the uninterrupted activity of a Redeemer be spoken of in the same terms with that of the universal Guardian and Governor—no pause in the one any more than in the other, no moment of idleness, no interval of repose—and Christ could employ the present tense in speaking not only of the Father's operations, but of his own, just as he could apply to himself the sublime definition, "I am that I am;" and say to the Jews when they arraigned him for healing on the Sabbath, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Now we are aware, that, in thus showing you the unremitting activity

which had been required from the Mediator, we do not apparently take as wide a sweep, or display as mighty a work, as under our first head of discourse, when the employments of the Creator engaged our attention. We have confined ourselves to the single globe on which we dwell, and to the single race to which we belong: whereas before, we had immensity across which to travel, and countless orders of being to gather under the wing of the one Great Protector. But possibly we take a contracted view of the office and occupation of the Son, when we reduce them within narrower limits than those of the Father. It may be, that our world is the only world on which evil gained footing, and our race the only race over which Satan triumphed. But if this opinion were uncontestedly proved just, it would not follow that the mediatorial work of Christ was confined, in its consequences, to Adam and his posterity. If all those worlds, which we see travelling in their brightness, be inhabited by beings who never transgressed, I do not conclude that they cannot have interest in the office assumed by the second person in the Trinity. We know that the possibility of falling is inseparable from creatureship; so that there must be some external security, ere any finite being can be certain to keep its first estate. We know this from the very nature of the case: for it is to make the creature equal to the Creator, to suppose it in itself incapable of sin. We know this moreover from the history of fallen angels. They were the very loftiest of created beings: they lived in the light of God's immediate presence: there was nothing from without to originate temptation: and nevertheless they rebelled against their Maker, and procured for themselves an eternity of torment.

But if the possibility of falling away must thus exist throughout the universe, why are we to conclude that Christ, in his office of Mediator, has done nothing for those ranks of intelligent being which have maintained their allegiance? If they are now secured against falling away, what has made them secure? What has thrown round them such a rampart against the incursions of evil, that there is certainty of

their continuing the obedient and the happy? We know of no satisfactory answer to these questions—and they are questions which force themselves upon every man who considers what creatureship is—but that which supposes the whole universe interested in the suretyship of Jesus, and affected by his mediation. Of course, we do not mean, that, where no sin had been committed there could be need of the shedding of blood. But those who required not expiation, required the being confirmed and established; they required to have their happiness made permanent through some correction of its natural mutability. When, therefore, the Son of God undertook to link the created with the uncreated, the finite with the infinite, in his own divine person, he probably did that which gave stability to unfallen orders, as well as wrought the recovery of a fallen. He maintained the obedient, as well as raised the disobedient; and, by the same act, rendered it impossible that those then pure should be polluted, and possible, that men, though polluted, might be cleansed. And now, if you tell me of glorious worlds, where the inhabitants have no sins of which to repent, I do not, on that account, conclude that they cannot join with me in gratitude to a Mediator. Whilst I thank and bless him for my restoration, they may thank and bless him for their preservation. His the arm which has raised me from ruin: his may be the arm which has retained them in glory. Why, then, may we not think that the mediatorial energy is every jot as wisely diffused and as incessantly occupied, as that of the Upholder and Governor of the universe? It is not this globe alone, it is every world throughout a teeming immensity, which furnishes employment to the Father, engaging his inspections, requiring his support, and offering him homage. And equally may the Son be occupied with every home of intelligent being, ministering, throughout the broad sweep of the spiritual creation, to the retaining those in obedience who are by nature in constant danger of apostacy. Hence, just as we refer it to the immediate agency of God, that stars and planets retain their places, and perform their revolutions, so would we refer it to the im-



mediate agency of Christ, that the successive ranks of the heavenly hosts preserve their glory, and walk their brilliant circuits: and we have no account to give why there is no jostling in the material world, and no apostacy in the moral: why the wants of whatsoever liveth are supplied, and all that is holy in created orders is kept from decay—none but that furnished by the combination of providential and mediatorial activity, which is here affirmed by Christ, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

There is yet another consideration, suggested by these words of our Lord, with which we would, in conclusion, engage your attention. Christ had wrought a miracle on the Sabbath; and he justified his so doing by stating that his work allowed of no interruptions, but must be prosecuted incessantly, like that of actuating and sustaining the universe. The effect of this statement should be to give us the same confidence in addressing ourselves to Christ as our Mediator, and to God as our Father. The providence on which we depend for daily bread is not, it appears, more active or unwearied than the intercession through which must come our daily grace. And as that providence watches what is mean and inconsiderable, so that not even a sparrow falls unobserved, we conclude that the intercession leaves not out the very poorest; and that, consequently, insignificance can no more exclude us from the sympathy and succor of a Savior, than from the bounty and guardianship of God. There should be something very consolatory to the timid and downcast, in the parallel which our text draws between the agencies of the Father and the Son. The Son, it appears, is as assiduously employed in his office of Mediator, as the Father in that of the common Parent and Ruler: then let me judge what may be expected from the one, by what I know of the other. The Father "feedeth the young ravens," espouseth the cause of the

widow, and declares and proves himself the helper of the friendless. Then the Son will do no less: "He will not break the bruised reed, and the smoking flax he will not quench." He will be the High Priest of those who have only, like the widow, two mites to present; and will sprinkle his blood on the unworthiest, "without money and without price." "My Father worketh;" and whom does he neglect, whom fail to sustain? "I work;" and to whom will I refuse pardon, who shall come to me and be cast out? It were to destroy all the energy of the sentence, to take all force from the combination, to doubt that Christ is as vigilant about my soul, as earnest in noting my spiritual dangers, as liberal in supplying my spiritual wants, as is God in reference to my body, though I cannot breathe the breath which he does not inspire, nor eat the morsel which he does not provide. And this should produce great confidence in Christ as a Mediator. If there be one of us who has long lain, like the impotent man, by the pool of Bethesda, deriving no benefit from the salutary waters, let him look up in faith to the Savior, who is now saying to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" and as a proof that this Savior yet worketh on the Sabbath, he shall find his limbs strengthened, and he shall depart from the temple, "walking, and leaping and praising God." Yes, if ye will indeed be earnest in breaking loose from evil habits, renouncing practices, and forsaking associates, against which conscience warns you, we can promise that Christ will so communicate unto you the assistances of his Spirit, that you shall become living proofs that the mediatorial energy is not abated; whilst stars, and forests, and mountains are witnessing to the unwearied activities of our Maker, ye shall witness to the unwearied activities of our Redeemer: and thus shall full evidence be given that Christ might still say, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

## SERMON III.

## THE RESURRECTION OF DRY BONES.

"And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest."  
Ezekiel, 37 : 3.

In the preceding chapter Ezekiel had delivered very animated and encouraging predictions of the prosperity of the houses of Israel and Judah. There is a fulness in these predictions which will scarce admit of our applying them exclusively to events which have already occurred. Ezekiel prophesied during the Babylonish captivity; and we may believe that the words which he was commissioned to utter, had a primary reference to the then desolate estate of his country and nation. When he speaks of dispersion and captivity, and when he pours forth announcements of restoration and greatness, it may well be supposed that there is, at least, an allusion to the existing circumstances of the Jews, and their approaching deliverance by Cyrus. And it is possible that those, who first heard his predictions, received them only in their primary sense, and looked not on to a more thorough fulfilment, worthy of the splendor of the figures, and the amplitude of the language. But to ourselves, who can compare the event with the prophecy, it must be evident that a deliverance, greater than any past, was foreseen by Ezekiel. Even if it could be shown that the condition of the Jews, after their return from Babylon, answered to the prophet's lofty descriptions of national prosperity, we should be unable to interpret the predictions without having respect to yet future things. There can hardly be dispute that the ten tribes, which constituted the kingdom of Israel, have never been restored to their own land, but are still in some mysterious seclusion, exiles from Palestine. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were led

captive by Nebuchadnezzar, and sent back by Cyrus. Undoubtedly, certain individuals, who belonged to the kingdom of Israel, were mixed with these in captivity and in restoration. But as a body, the ten tribes have never yet been restored; so that, if predictions, which refer to the house of Judah, could be proved accomplished by their return home from Babylon, the like account could not be given of those which have to do with the kingdom of Israel.

And if you examine the predictions of Ezekiel in the foregoing chapter, and in that which contains our text, you will perceive that Israel is so associated with Judah, that no restoration can be ultimately intended, which does not include both. This might be proved of each part of the prophecies in question; but we will confine ourselves to the close of the second of the chapters. The prophet is directed to take two sticks; to write on one, "For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions;" on the other, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions." These sticks, thus inscribed, are to be held in the hand of Ezekiel; they are to become one stick in his hand; and then he is to utter a prediction, explanatory of this symbolical transaction, declaring that both Judah and Israel should be gathered back from their dispersions; that they should no longer be two nations, but be combined, like the sticks, into one people under one king. You can give no fair interpretation of such a prophecy as this, if you limit its scope to the events of past days: for you can find no account in



history of such a restoration of the twelve tribes, and of their re-establishment as one nation under David their prince.

Accordingly, we conclude that yet future occurrences passed before the view of the prophet. We believe that the seer had his eye on a restoration of the children of Abraham, of which none that has yet happened can have been more than a type. And we refer these chapters, though without denying that they may have had a primary and partial accomplishment in events connected with the close of the Babylonish captivity, to a glorious season, when God shall bring to their own land the people whom he hath cast off in displeasure, and who have been wanderers for centuries over the habitable earth. Then, when from the east and west, from the north and south, there shall have flowed into Judea the sons and daughters of those to whom the land was originally given, and the re-instated people shall hold the sovereignty of the globe beneath the sceptre of the long-rejected Christ, will there be a deliverance worthy of the triumphant strains of Isaiah, and a greatness commensurate with the majestic descriptions of Ezekiel.

Such is the first point which it is necessary to settle before entering on the examination of our text and its context. We must determine the period whose occurrences the prophet delineates; else we may easily go far wrong in explaining his sketches. But this is not all; there is a second preliminary to which we would direct your attention. The Jews are to be regarded as a typical nation, so that their history is figurative, and may be studied as a parable. You cannot ask proof of this; for it is hardly possible to read the books of Moses, to follow the Israelites into their prison in Egypt, and then through the wilderness to their rest in Canaan, without feeling that what happened to this people describes, as by a figure, what happens to the church. There is manifestly a moral in all that occurs; or, to speak more accurately, our spiritual history is traced in the events which befell the Jews as a nation. With them we are naturally slaves under an imperious task-master; with them we are delivered from bondage, though by a

mightier than Moses; with them we march through a wilderness, dreary in itself, but rendered more appalling by our murmuring and unbelief, to a land that floweth with the milk and the honey. And it may be, that this typical character of the Jews extends beyond these simple and self-evident particulars. We should be disposed to say of the history of this people, taken in its spreadings over the future as well as the past, that it is the exact miniature of that of the human race. The Jews have lost their peculiar position in the favor of God, and are wanderers from the land which is specially their own. But they are yet to be restored to their forfeited place, and to enjoy in Canaan a higher than their first dignity. Thus the human race, having apostatized from God, is left for a while in the dreariness of exile, but is reserved for the richest splendors of immortality. Men, therefore, in general, may be to angels what the Jews are to the rest of humankind. Angels may read in the records of the fallen but yet beloved race, precisely what we read in those of the rejected, but not forgotten, people. And as we look forward to the restoration of the Jews, as big with interest to all the dwellers on this globe, so may angels expect the final "manifestation of the sons of God," when Christ and his church shall shine out in their glory, as fraught with the mightiest results to every rank of intelligent being.

But without examining, more at length, the respects in which the Jews may be regarded as a typical people, we may consider the general fact so readily acknowledged that we may safely assume it in any process of reasoning. And as a consequence on this allowed fact, we may suppose that, when we meet with a figurative delineation of things that were to happen to the Jews, it is to be also treated as a figurative delineation of things that relate to the whole human race. At least, and this is probably as far as we shall find it necessary to go in our present discourse, there can be no ground for calling an interpretation fanciful, if, after treating a parable as descriptive, in the first instance, of the state or expectation of the Jews, we assign it a spiritual meaning, and apply it, in the second

place, to our own circumstances, or those of the church.

Now we have thus cleared the way for our entering on the examination of that very singular portion of holy writ with which our text is associated. We have determined that, so far as it is prophetic of occurrences in the history of the Jews, its accomplishment is to be mainly sought in the future rather than the past; we have also ascertained that, though in its primary application, it belongs only to a solitary people, it may be regarded as referring, in its spiritual meaning, to the whole human race. Let these preliminaries be borne in mind, and they will aid us in avoiding mistake, and discovering truth.

The portion of Scripture which we are about to investigate, is, as we have just hinted, one of the most singular which its pages present. It relates what may be considered as a vision granted to the prophet Ezekiel, though the narrative might pass for that of an actual occurrence. Ezekiel, after uttering predictions which breathe the future glories of Israel and Judah, is "carried down in the Spirit of the Lord," and set down in a valley full of bones. These bones, so numerous that they lay on all sides of the prophet, appeared to have belonged to men long dead, for "they were very dry," as though they had been for years thus scattered and exposed. As Ezekiel gazed on this ghastly spectacle, there came to him from God the question of our text, "Son of man, can these bones live?" It was a hard question, at a time when "life and immortality" had not been "brought to light by the Gospel:" and therefore the prophet, without casting doubt on the power of the Almighty, returns the modest and half-inquiring answer, "O Lord God, thou knowest." The heavenly voice then commands him to prophesy upon these bones, to address them as though they were living and intelligent, and to predict their being reconstructed into symmetry, and re-animated with breath. The prophet betrays no reluctance: he does not hesitate because it seemed useless to address these fragments of skeletons; but at once obeys the command, and delivers the message. And whilst he was in the very act of uttering the prophecy, lo, a noise was heard as of a rustling

among the bones; they began to move, as though instinct with life, each seeking his fellow, so that bone came to bone with the very nicest precision. Then "the sinews and the flesh came upon them;" the sinews bound them, and the skin covered them: and thus the valley was filled with human bodies. These bodies, however, were as yet without breath; but the voice of the Lord was again heard, directing the prophet to prophesy to the wind, that it might come and breathe upon the slain. This having been done, the breath came into the carcasses; they started from the ground as animated things, "and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

Such was the vision granted to Ezekiel; and God immediately informed him of its purport. He told him that these bones were the whole house of Israel; and that, however desolate the condition of that people might appear, he would yet open their graves, and cause them to come out of their graves. As the bones had been rebuilt into human bodies, so should the disjointed and shattered people of Israel be reconstructed into a kingdom; and God would put in them his spirit, and make them live, and place them once more in their own land. It admits, therefore, of no dispute that the parable—for such may the vision justly be styled—was primarily designed to predict a restoration to Palestine of its rightful but exiled possessors. But with this design we are at liberty to connect another, that of representing, under figures derived from things happening to the Jews, truths in which all men have interest. And thus our business, whilst endeavoring to explain the parable more at length, will be to apply it to the children of Abraham, in the first place in their national, and in the second in their typical capacity, and to show in both cases the fidelity of the representation.

Now you are to observe the position in which the vision stands: it is not a detached thing, but occurs in the midst of a continuous prophecy, having manifest respect to what precedes, and what follows. The two chapters, the 36th and 37th of the book of Ezekiel, contain one noble prediction of glories to be reached by Judah and Israel:



and though this prediction may seem interrupted by the vision, a little inquiry will show you that it is but illustrated and confirmed. The Jews, to whom Ezekiel addressed the glowing announcements of the 36th chapter, would probably look on their forlorn and seemingly hopeless estate, and conclude it impossible that what was so fallen should ever reach the predicted eminence. To meet this suspicion the vision is granted. The wretchedness, and, on all human appearance, the hopelessness, of their condition is freely acknowledged; for they are represented as whitening bones, scattered over a plain, in regard of which there could be no expectation of a resurrection unto life. But when these bones move, and "an exceeding great army" of living men succeeds to the array of disjointed skeletons, the Jews are most powerfully taught how wrongly they argued from the difficulty to the improbability. There could not be a transition less to have been expected than that exhibited in the valley of vision: and, if God could effect this, why should it be thought that he could not make good his promises to a conquered and dispersed people? Thus the vision seems introduced into the midst of the prophecy, not to break its continuity, but to obviate an objection which might be rising in the minds of the hearers; and we are therefore to take the vision as a part of the prophecy, and to refer it with the rest to yet future times. In so doing, we deny not, as we stated at the outset, that one purpose of the vision may have been to comfort the Jews then in Babylon, and to assure them of a speedy return to the land of their fathers. But forasmuch as the whole prediction, of which the vision forms part, can be satisfied by nothing which has already occurred, we seem bound to seek the fulfilment of the vision itself in the yet coming fortunes of Judah and Israel. Let us then regard the parable before us as figuring the condition of God's people in their dispersion, and that restoration which we are yet bidden to expect; and we shall find an accuracy and a fulness of description, not surpassed in any portion of prophecy. Of course, we can only gather our arguments and illustrations from the history of the

Jews; for we are ignorant of what has befallen the ten tribes, since carried into captivity by the king of Assyria. But this will suffice. If the description be proved correct, so far as we have the power of examining its accuracy, we shall have little cause to question its fidelity on points which lie beyond our range of information.

We observe the state of the Jews during long centuries past; and we ask whether it have not been described to the letter by what Ezekiel beheld in the valley of vision? Ever since the Romans were let loose on the devoted land and people, the whole globe has been this valley of vision; for everywhere have been scattered the fragments of the once favored nation. Both the civil and the ecclesiastical polity of the Jews were completely broken up; and there has never been the least approach towards the reconstruction of any government of their own. They have lived indeed under every sort of rule, having been mixed with every people under heaven, though all along kept marvellously distinct. But never, since their sins provoked God to give them up, have they had governors and laws of their own; and never, therefore, have they been ought else than the skeleton of a nation, and that too a skeleton whose bones have been detached, and spread confesedly throughout the whole valley. And if there had come, at any time, a voice from heaven, demanding whether these dry bones could live, whether the dispersed Jews could ever again be gathered under one head, and within their own land, the answer of those, who most acknowledged the divine power, must have been, "O Lord God, thou knowest." On all human computation, there lies an improbability, which is little short of an impossibility, against the return of the children of Abraham, from every section of the earth, to Judea, and their re-establishment as an independent people. The bones are many: who shall collect so vast a multitude? The bones are dry: who shall animate what hath so long wanted vitality? Yet, we are commanded to prophesy over these bones; to declare, in unqualified language, that the Jews shall return home, when "the times of the Gentiles" are fulfill-

ed, rebuild their Jerusalem, and possess the sovereignty of the earth. If there be a point on which prophecy is clearer and more diffuse than on another, it seems to us to be this of the restoration of Israel, and of the setting up of the throne of David in the land which the stranger has long possessed and profaned. And whilst we have this "sure word of prophecy," it is not the apparent difficulty which can make us hesitate to expect the marvellous occurrence. There shall be a stirring amongst the dry bones. We know not by what mysterious impulse and agency a people, spread over the whole earth, shall be suddenly and simultaneously moved: but bone shall come to bone, Jew shall seek out and combine with Jew: the sinew and the flesh shall come up upon these bones—there shall be a principle of union, combining what have long been detached; and thus shall the scattered elements be reconstructed into the skeleton, and then the skeleton shall give place to the full grown body. This body will yet have to be quickened—the Jews must not only be re-united as a people, they must be converted to the faith which they have long despised, and be brought to the confessing their crucified Messiah. And this must be specially the work of the Spirit of the living God, entering within them, and stirring them from that moral deadness in which they have lain during their long alienation. A separate prophecy is uttered in<sup>3</sup> reference to the coming of the breath into the body; and it is not improbable that this assigning different times to the reconstruction and reanimation of the body, might be intended to mark, what seems elsewhere indicated, that the Jews will be recombined into a separate people, before prevailed on to acknowledge the Christ; that it will not be until after their resettlement in Canaan, that they will nationally embrace christianity. Certainly, this is what seems taught us by the prophecies of Zechariah; for it is after beholding the Jews in possession of Jerusalem that we read, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they

shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son." So that the conversion of the people is to follow their restoration; just as, in the vision before us, the quickening of the body by God's Spirit is quite separate from the binding of the bones, and the covering them with flesh.

But, whatever the order of events, the final result is to be that the Jews shall be reinstated in Judea, and receive Jesus as Messiah. The bones having been formed into the body, and the body animated from above, the dispersed and powerless people shall be "an exceeding great army," ready to wage the battle of the Lord God Almighty. The valley of vision, heretofore covered with the fragments of a nation which has long ceased to have a name amongst kingdoms, shall be crowded with emissaries from Jerusalem, bearing in their hands the cross which their fathers erected and proclaiming the Savior whom those fathers denied. We admit again, that, on every human calculation, such result is almost incredible; and that, though we live in the old age of the world, when the day is perhaps not distant which is to witness this stupendous, resurrection, we are unable to assign the mode in which it will be effected. But the vision of Ezekiel sets before us an immediate interference of God, showing that there will be miracle in the restoration of Israel, as there would be in the gathering of the bones with which the valley was strewed. But if there is to be miracle, the strangeness brings no evidence against the truth; and we wait with confidence the issuing of a divine edict, which shall be heard and obeyed by the dispersed seed of Abraham. The aspect of the valley may still be the same as when Ezekiel was carried thither "in the Spirit of the Lord." Still, in the whole compass of imagery there may be no more faithful representation of the national condition of the Jews, than that which sets them before us as the pieces into which skeletons have been shivered, and which have been tossed over the globe by some irresistible deluge. Nevertheless we are listening, with the prophet, for a sound as of a shaking amongst these bones. It shall be heard: and the nations, on whose



mountains, and in whose valleys, the bones are thickly strewn, shall be startled by the mysterious noise. And when, as though actuated by one uncontrollable impulse, the thousands in every land who have been mixed with its population, and yet not confounded; who have lived under its laws, and yet been aliens, made themselves homes in its cities, and yet been foreigners; the remains of a dead nation, the wreck of a lost state, the shreds of a scattered community—when these shall arise, and league themselves to one purpose, and pour into Judea, till the waste and desolate places swarm, as in ancient days, with the tribes of the Lord—then will there be accomplished to the full what Ezekiel saw in strange vision; and the whole world shall confess that the marvel would not be exceeded, nay, would only be represented as in a figure, if piles of human bones were formed suddenly into bodies, and a vast army sprang from the dust of the sepulchres.

But we proceed from considering the Jews in their national, to the considering them in their typical capacity. We have already given you reasons for regarding the Jews as a typical people, and which therefore warrant our searching for truths which concern the whole race, in representations which primarily belonged to a solitary nation. And if your minds be informed on the great doctrines of Scripture, you can scarcely read the parable without feeling that it was written for our instruction, that it presents as accurate a picture of men in general, as of the Jews in particular. You know that the foundation truth of the whole christian system, that which is taken for granted in every part of the Gospel, and to disprove which would be to disprove the necessity for a Mediator's interference, is the truth of human corruption and helplessness. It would not be easy to exaggerate this truth, to overstate it as taught in holy writ, though erroneous inferences may be deduced from it, or false representations given of its character. The important thing is, that we carefully distinguish between man as the citizen of this world, and man as the citizen of another world; for unless such distinction be kept in mind, we may easily advance statements in regard of human

degeneracy, which men will justly reject as unfair and overcharged. So long as man is viewed only as a member of society, he is undoubtedly capable of much that is noble and excellent; it were absurd to make the sympathies which he can display, and the virtues which he can cultivate, the subject of one sweeping and indiscriminate censure. If he did not belong to two worlds; if he owed every thing to his fellow-creatures, and nothing to his Creator; we should be met, on all hands, by fine instances of what is generous, and upright, and amiable, which would tell strongly against our theory of the corruption of nature, and almost force us to confess that man cannot be "very far gone from original righteousness." But when you survey the human race in relation to its Maker, then it is that the corruption may be proved radical and total. You will not find that those who are most exemplary in the discharge of relative duties, and whose conduct, in all the intercourses of life, wins the most of respect and admiration, are by nature one jot more disposed to love God, and recognize his authority, than the openly dissolute. There are the very widest differences between men, regarded as members of society; there is a thorough uniformity amongst them, if you judge by aversion from God, and determination to sacrifice the eternal for the temporal. If they belonged to this world alone, they could not be proved totally and equally corrupt: for this would be to deny that lovely things, and things of good report, yet linger amid the ruins of humanity. But forasmuch as they belong also to another world, and have obligations laid on them by their relation to their Maker, the corruption may be demonstrated without the slightest exception; for you cannot find the solitary instance of a man who has by nature any love of God, or any hatred of sin, or any desire after holiness. This, as we believe, is the fair statement of the doctrine of human depravity—a depravity which does not prevent the play of much that is amiable, and the circulation of much that is estimable, between man and man; but, in consequence of which, all men are alike indisposed to the having God in their thoughts, and

alike incapacitated for seeking his favor.

And when the Bible would set this doctrine before us, it employs undoubtedly strong figures; but not stronger, if the case be examined, than are warranted by the facts. Thus, as you are all aware, there is no more common representation than one which supposes men in a state of death, morally dead, and therefore totally disqualified for the functions of spiritual life. We may admit that this looks, at first sight, like an overcharged representation; and men accordingly are very loth to allow its correctness. They know that the soul has vast powers and capacities, and that she can exert herself mightily in investigating truth. They know also that the faculties and feelings of the inner man are far enough from torpid, but possess much of vital energy. Hence they see not how, in a moral point of view, any more than in a physical, men can justly be called dead; and they suppose, that in this instance at least, the figurative language of Scripture is to be explained with many deductions and allowances. But we are scarcely disposed to admit that the language is in this case figurative at all. We believe that the soul, considered relatively to that other world to which she rightly belongs, betrays precisely that insensibility, and that incapacity of action, which characterize a dead body, in reference to the world of matter by which it is surrounded. If the body be reckoned dead, because it can no longer see, nor hear, nor speak, nor move, there are the same reasons why the soul, in her natural state, should be reckoned dead; for she has no eye for the light of heaven, no ear for its melodies, no taste for its pleasures, and no energy for its occupations. The soul is as insensible and powerless with regard to the world of spirit, as the dead body with regard to that of matter; why then should we not use the same language, and declare the soul dead; and that too with no more of a figure of speech than when the term is applied to the inanimate corpse? The soul may be quite alive, so far as this earth is concerned, for she may be able to seek with the greatest ardor whatever it can offer, and nevertheless be quite dead, so far

as heaven is concerned, for she may be totally incapable of either pursuing or desiring what is invisible and eternal. And hence we conclude that the representing unconverted men as "dead in trespasses and sins," is not the drawing an overharsh or exaggerated picture, but rather the delineating, with great faithfulness, that depravity of our nature which was a consequence of Adam's transgression. This depravity is total when men are viewed relatively to God, whatever it may be when you consider them in the relationships of life; so that they are dead in regard of their immortality, however alive as citizens of earth.

Let then the world be surveyed by one who knows and feels that men are destined for eternity, and what aspect will it wear if not that of the valley of vision, through which the prophet Ezekiel was commissioned to pass? On all sides are the remains of mighty beings, born for immortality, but dislocated by sin. Can these be men, creatures fashioned after the image of God, and constructed to share his eternity? What disease hath been here, eating away the spiritual sinew, and consuming the spiritual substance, so that the race which walked gloriously erect in the free light of heaven, and could hold communion with angels, hath wasted down into moral skeletons, yea, disjointed fragments, from which we may just guess its origin, whilst they publish its ruin? It is not that men are the spectres, the ghosts, of what they were, as made in the likeness of God, and with powers for intercourse with what is loftiest in the universe. They have gone beyond this. It is in their spiritual and deathless part that they have become material and lifeless: it is the soul from which the breath of heaven has been taken: and the soul, deprived of this breath, seemed turned into a thing of earth, as though compounded, like the body, of dust; and dwindled away till its fibres were shrivelled and snapped, and its powers lay scattered and enervated, like bones where the war has raged and the winds have swept. It may indeed seem like ascribing what is corporeal to spirit, and forgetting the very nature of the soul, thus to speak of man's imperishable part, as we would of his body



when resolved into its elements. But the very thing of which we accuse man, is that, by his apostacy, he has assimilated the soul to the body; he has so buried the immaterial in the material, the half deity in the half dust, that we know him not as the compound of the ethereal and the earthly, but as all flesh, just as though the mortal had crushed and extinguished the very principle of immortality. And, therefore, do we describe him, in his moral capacity, by terms which, in their strict import, apply to him only as formed out of matter: "a spirit," said Christ, "hath not flesh and blood;" but nevertheless we may speak of the soul as wasted into a skeleton, and then of that skeleton as broken into fragments, because it may be declared of the whole man, that he "is of the earth, earthy," that he has become, in his every respect, as though made of the corruptible, and resolvable into it.

We declare then again, that, if this globe be taken as the valley of vision, it is strewed with bones, as though countless armies had been slain, and their bodies left unburied. We declare of any narrow section of this valley, which God may set us specially to observe, that, if not filled with the remains of slaughtered thousands, it is occupied by souls "dead in trespasses and sins;" that there are, on the right hand and on the left, enervated powers, and torpid energies, and extinguished affections, which belonged originally to an immortal spirit, but which now serve only to remind us of such a spirit, as the confused relics in a charnel-house can but remind us of the human form. Ay, if the Spirit of the living God were to enable us to inspect this assembly, as it enabled the prophet to take the survey of the valley, we know that we should find in it, spiritually considered, a vast mass of wasted strength, and withered fibre, and broken muscle; evidences as irresistible of souls that have long lain dead, as were the bones which had no flesh without and no marrow within, of bodies long since decomposed and dissolved. We know that, with all that elasticity and activity which the unconverted amongst you can display, when the objects of sense solicit their pursuit, we should find every faculty

so benumbed, and every capacity so closed, in regard to the high things of eternity, that we should be as much forced to pronounce them the mere skeletons of immortal beings, as to proclaim them only the fragments of men, were we to see what might be left from the gnawings of the grave. And, if we had nothing to judge by but the apparent probability, so little ground would there be for expecting the resurrection of these souls, and their re-endowment with the departed vitality, that if, after wandering to and fro through the valley, and mourning over the ruins of what had been created magnificent and enduring, there should come to us, as to the prophet, the voice of the Almighty, "Son of man, can these bones live?" our answer could be only the meek confession of ignorance, "O Lord God, thou knowest."

But we go on to observe that the parable is not more accurate, as delineating our condition by nature, than as exhibiting the possibility of a restoration to life. It might have seemed a hopeless and useless thing, that Ezekiel should prophesy to the dry bones in the valley; and if the souls which we desire to convert, be, as we have described them, actually dead, it may appear a vain thing to preach, and thus to deal with them as though they were the living. But the prophet did not hesitate; his commission was clear; and he allowed not unbelief to withhold him from addressing the inanimate piles by which he was surrounded. Neither are we to be deterred by the lifelessness of the parties on whom we have to act; the command is positive; we are to preach the Gospel to those of whom we believe that they are spiritually in the grave, and to say to them, without any wavering because they seem unable to hear, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And we bless God that, however weak and inefficient, to all appearance, the instrumentality employed, there is often the same result as followed the prophesying of Ezekiel; as the dry bones were stirred, so are the dead souls also started. It cometh frequently to pass, more frequently, it may be, than shall be known till all secrets are laid bare at the great day of judgment; that, when

the minister of Christ is launching the thunders of the word, or dilating, with all persuasiveness, on the provision which has been made for the repentant, a sound is heard, if not by men, yet by the attendant angels who throng our sanctuaries; the sound of an agitated spirit, moving in its grave-clothes, as though the cold relics were mysteriously perturbed. The prophesying goes on in the valley of vision; and there is a shaking amongst the bones, as close appeals are made to the long torpid conscience, and the motives of an after state of being are brought to bear upon those who are dead in their sins. And then may it be said that bone cometh unto bone—the different faculties of the soul, which have heretofore been disjointed and dispersed, combining into one resolve and effort to repent and forsake sin—and that sinews and flesh knit together, and clothe the bones, the various powers of the inner man being each roused to its due work; so that, as there appeared before the prophet the complete human body in exchange for the broken skeleton, we have now a spirit stung with the consciousness of its immortality, where we had before the undying without sign of animation.

But this is not enough. There may be conviction of sin, and a sense of the necessity that some great endeavor be made to secure its forgiveness; and thus may the soul, no longer resolved into inefficient fragments, be bound together as the heir of eternity; yet there may not be spiritual life, for the soul may not have been quickened with the breath which is from heaven. There is a great difference between the man who is not caring for salvation at all, and another who has been stirred to anxiety, but nevertheless has not submitted himself to the teachings of the Holy Ghost. The former has only the skeleton, the naked and broken framework of a soul; whereas in the latter there has been the compacting and clothing the anatomy. Yet the one may not have spiritual life any more than the other. He may execute some of the motions of a living thing, and not be actually resuscitated; as such a power as galvanism might have caused the limbs of the bodies, which thronged suddenly the valley of vision, to stir as

with life, though there had been no vital principle. Accordingly, the parable does not end with the formation of the perfect body, figurative as that was of the reconstruction of the soul into a being aware of its immortality; it proceeds to the animating the body, and thus to the representing the quickening of the soul. The prophet is commanded to prophesy unto the wind, and then breath comes into the bodies which he had seen succeed the scattered bones. This part of the parable is expressly interpreted as denoting the entrance of God's Spirit into the house of Israel, that they might live; and we therefore learn the important truth, that, whatever the advances which may be made towards the symmetry and features of a new creature, there is nothing that can be called life, until the Holy Ghost come and breathe upon the slain. And we have to bless God that, in this part also, the vision is continually receiving its accomplishment. We preach the word unto these bones; we say unto them, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" We preach it in the belief, that, though there seem no organ of hearing, God can procure it admission where he designs it to be effectual; and accordingly there is often, as we have told you, a shaking amongst the bones; and souls which had heretofore seemed sepulchred in matter, arise as if elastic with immortality, and eagerly inquire, "What must we do to be saved?" But this is not necessarily conversion; this may be only conviction; after a few strugglings and heavings, what we had looked upon as revived may relapse into insensibility. It would do so, if the Spirit of the living God were not to enter as the breath of the soul. But it does thus enter; and the "dead in trespasses and sins" stand upon their feet, and "run with patience the race set before them." It is the special office of the Holy Ghost to open the graves in which sinners lie, and to animate the moral corpse, so that the dead are "born again." There would be no use in our prophesying upon the bones, if there were not this divine agent to revivify the buried: we might indeed go down into the sepulchres, and gather together the mouldering remains of humanity, and compound them into a body, and then,



us by the strange power of electricity, work the limbs into a brief and fearful imitation of the living thing: but the active and persevering wrestler for the prizes of eternity, oh! the Spirit of God must be in every member of this creature, and in every nerve, and in every muscle; and let that Spirit only be taken from him, and presently would you observe a torpor creeping over his frame, and all the tokens of moral death succeeding to the fine play of the pulses of moral life.

To the Spirit, then, of God we refer exclusively that work of resuscitating dead souls, which was represented in vision to the prophet Ezekiel. We say to every one of you, that, if he have not this spirit, it is not his being awake to the fact of his having a soul, it is not his admission of a system of orthodox divinity, it is not his membership with an apostolical church, it is not his diligent performance of a certain set of duties, which can assure us that he lives—we read in the book of Revelation of some who had a name that they lived, and yet were dead—all this may prove nothing more than the binding of bone to bone, and the covering them with flesh, so that the ghastliness of the skeleton has been exchanged for the comeliness of the perfect body. Unless you are actuated by the Holy Ghost as your vital principle, feeling and obeying his motions, depending on his influences, laboring in his strength, we are bound to tell you that you are duped by the worst jugglery ever practised on a rational creature; the dead is made to pass for the living, and the fantastic movements of an image are mistaken for the free soarings of an intelligent being.

But there is one respect in which the vision, as thus interpreted, appears not to be thoroughly accomplished. We carry on our prophesying over the heaps of dry bones; and now and then there may be produced the effects of which we have spoken: a solitary sinner arises from his lethargy, and sets himself to the working out salvation. But what is there in any one district of the valley; nay, what is there in the combined districts of the valley, supposing that valley to include the whole earth; which answers to the starting up of "an exceeding great army?" In

the valley which Ezekiel traversed, such was the result of his prophesying. On the right hand and on the left, before and behind, the bones stirred as if instinct with life, and the seer was quickly encompassed by rank upon rank of the children of the resurrection. What would be the parallel to this, if, at this moment, and in this place, the parable were to be spiritually fulfilled? It would be, that, if there be still amongst you the tens, or the fifties, or the hundreds, of souls sepulchred in flesh, these tens, or these fifties, or these hundreds, would be roused by the announcement of wrath to come, and spring into consciousness that they have been born for eternity; so that, however, at the commencement of our worshipping, the dry bones had been scattered profusely amongst us, at its close the whole assembly would be one mass of life, and no individual would depart, as he came, "dead in trespasses and sins." It would be—we dare not expect so mighty a resuscitation, and yet days shall come when even nations shall be "born in a day,"—that whatsoever is human within these walls would bear traces of a new creation, and man, woman, child, be "alive unto God" through Christ Jesus their Lord. And if the spiritual fulfilment were effected throughout the whole valley of vision, we should be living beneath the millennial dispensation, in that blessed season when all are to know the Lord "from the least to the greatest," and the knowledge of his glory is to fill the earth, "as the waters cover the sea." In exchange for the millions who now sit in darkness and the shadow of death, buried in superstition and ignorance, we should have the universal population of this globe rejoicing in acquaintance with Christ, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness to his praise. And what though the valley be still full of dry bones, life having only here and there entered into the funeral piles? a thousand prophecies centre in the future, all assuring us of a spiritual resurrection, general as will be that, when sea, and mountain, and desert shall give up their dead. It seems the representation of these prophecies, that christianity shall not advance, by successive steps, to universal dominion, but that a time

of great depression, yea, almost of extinction, shall immediately precede that of unlimited sovereignty. When Isaiah calls to the prostrate Jerusalem, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," he adds, "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people"—thus intimating, that, at the very moment of the restitution of all things, a deeper than the ordinary night shall rest on the nations of the world. And, therefore, may it be that the aspect of the globe, as the day draws on of its glorious renovation, will be more than ever that of the valley of vision, ere the prophesying commenced, and the skeletons moved. Ezekiel might be brought from his rest, and set down in the midst of the valley; and he would still have to say that the bones were very many, and very dry. But the Lord's arm will not be "shortened that it cannot save:" suddenly, when there might appear least likelihood of a shaking amongst the countless heaps, shall a vivifying energy go out through the length and the breadth of the slain population. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live." Every where shall the process be rapidly carried on of the bones being combined into the skeleton, and covered with the flesh, and animated by the Spirit, till the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the "exceeding great army." This will be the perfect accomplishment of the prophetic vision. When every nation, and tribe, and tongue, shall have cast its idols "to the moles and to the bats;" when the religion of Christ shall have extirpated every superstition, and shrined itself in every heart; then shall there be a moral resurrection commensurate with the marvellous quickening of the dead on which Ezekiel gazed: the spiritual sepulchres will be emptied, and the almost quenched immortality be every where re-illuminated.

Yet though the parable, when morally interpreted, be thus now receiving a partial, and expecting a plenary, accomplishment, who can doubt, that, in its literal import, it had respect to that resurrection of the dead which will precede the general judgment? We regard the parable as one of those few portions of the Old Testament from

which might be inferred the resurrection of the body. The illustrating by the imagery of a resurrection, was almost the inculcating the doctrine of a resurrection. And, whether thus understood or not by the Jews, we may safely affirm that, to ourselves, the whole transaction in the valley of vision should present, under figures of extraordinary energy, man's final coming up from the dust of the earth. The trumpet of the archangel shall prophesy over the dry bones: its piercing blast shall say, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Who can tell the shaking that shall follow this prophecy—the earth heaving at its very core, that myriads upon myriads may burst from its womb? Then shall be the coming of bone unto bone: mysterious announcement! the dust shall seek its kindred dust; and though the elements of the body may have been dispersed to the four quarters of the earth, yet will they re-assemble, so that every man shall have his own. And then shall there be a prophesying to the souls in the separate state, as well as to the bones in the sepulchres. The souls shall know that the moment of reunion has arrived, and rush down to possess their reconstructed tabernacles. Then, when the whole man lives again, and the buried generations, from Adam to the last-born of his line, have put on immortality, "the exceeding great army" shall march to judgment. We cannot follow them—the eye is blinded by the interminable multitude, and the ear deafened by the tramp of the countless millions. But we shall be there, every one of us shall be there, to augment the crowd, and swell the thunder. O God, breathe now on the dry bones, that none of us be hereafter amongst those who shall awake "to shame and everlasting contempt." Again and again we prophesy upon the dry bones. We are not deterred by the apparent hopelessness. We have often prophesied in vain. There has been no shaking amongst the bones. Numbers have come unconverted, and numbers have gone away unconverted. But we will execute our commission once more, and, O that this time it may startle and agitate the dead—"let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let



him return unto the Lord; and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

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## SERMON IV.

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### PROTESTANTISM AND POPERY.

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"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."—Romans, 12 : 13.

In one of those touching addresses which Christ delivered to his disciples shortly before his crucifixion, he bequeathed them, as you will remember, the legacy of peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." It is observable that the peace, thus left us by Christ, is emphatically his peace; "my peace I give unto you"—and accordingly, we have a petition in our litany, "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace." Though bearing the title of the Prince of Peace, we know that Christ said in regard of himself, "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword." Hence it may be inferred that the peace, which may be called Christ's peace, that which Christ bequeathed and for which we pray, is not a peace which is necessarily to banish all divisions, but which is rather to subsist in the midst of divisions. The peace which Christ enjoyed as the founder of christianity, and which he may be regarded as intending when he spake of his peace, resulted from a consciousness that he was doing the will of God, and promoting the good of man. It was an internal rather than an external peace: for without were wars and fightings, the opposition of avowed enemies, and the coldness and suspicion even of friends. His peace, therefore, was not

peace with those around. There was charity, full and fervent charity, towards men most vehement in their enmity; but, at the same time, there was an unflinching exposure of their faults, and a determined opposition to their practices.

We may safely declare of Christ, that he never purchased peace by any thing like compromise. Though his heart overflowed with love towards the whole human race, he was far from being indulgent to their sins; on the contrary, he was too much their friend to be any thing but the stern reprover of their vices. Hence he had peace of conscience, rather than of condition: he indeed desired, and labored for both; but living in the midst of a sinful and perverse generation, he could not be at peace with mankind, save by leaving them unrebuked; and this would have been to purchase quiet by neglecting duty. The church, therefore, may thoroughly possess the legacy of peace bequeathed to her by Christ, and yet have no concord with the great mass of men. It may even be bound on her to do much by which, to all appearance, divisions will be fomented: for if she would imitate Christ, and thus enjoy his peace, she must be bold in denouncing every error, and never think that true brotherhood can be maintained by compromising principles. It is unquestionably her business to follow after the things "that make for

peace;" but she is to take special care, lest, in her eagerness to prevent discord, she surrender truth, and ward off separations by unwarrantable sacrifices.

Now the words of our text may be said to contemplate exactly that peace which may thus be regarded as bequeathed to us by Christ. The apostle enjoins as a duty, that we strive to live peaceably with all; but plainly intimates that it would be difficult to do so, or perhaps even impossible. He introduces two restrictive clauses, "if it be possible," and, "as much as lieth in you:" the latter implying that there were cases in which it would be a christian's own fault if disunion ensued; the former, that, probably, no amount of diligence and care could insure the universal harmony. It would seem, indeed, from the context of the verse, that St. Paul refers not so much to schisms in the visible church, as to differences and quarrels between man and man. But a rule, designed for the guidance of christians in their individual, must be applicable also in their collective capacity. If it be the duty of every member of the church, so far as in him lies, to live peaceably with others, it must undoubtedly be the duty of the church, as a body, to do all in her power towards promoting union and preventing schism. In each case, however, there may be a point at which separation becomes unavoidable; and therefore are the words, "if it be possible," prefixed to the precept. In the instance of an individual, the conduct of others may be so injurious and oppressive, that, with every disposition to concede, and the greatest patience under wrong, it may be absolutely necessary to shun intercourse, and even to adopt measures for self-defence. In the instance of a church, the tenets of some of her professed members may be so inconsistent with truth, or their practice so opposed to the Gospel, that to retain them in her communion would be faithlessness to her Master. Or a church, in her collective capacity, may grievously depart from the faith "once delivered to the saints:" she may introduce unsound doctrines, or superstitious observances: and then may it be the duty of those of her members, who are still zealous for "truth as it is in Jesus," to protest firmly against the

abomination, and finally to dissolve their union with that church, if she will not put from her the falsehood and idolatry.

The main thing to be borne in mind, is, as we have already intimated, that peace is too dearly purchased, if purchased by the least surrender of principle. That unity deserves not the name, which is produced by the resolution of avoiding, by mutual concessions, all differences in opinion. On points which are not fundamental much may be done by mutual concessions: and they must have much to answer for, who have torn and divided the visible church, when the matter in debate has been one of mere ceremony, or, at least, one involving nothing of indispensable truth. We doubt whether the mass of those, who, in modern days, have introduced sects and divisions amongst christians, could prove, in vindication of their conduct, that they had implicitly obeyed the direction of our text. It might be hard to show, if the grounds of separation were rigidly examined, that the impossible point had been reached, the point, that is, at which, if union be preserved, fundamental truth must be compromised. It should then only be impossible to a christian to live peaceably, when, to avoid schism, he must tolerate fatal error. And if separatists cannot make good their separation on this simple principle, their failing to live peaceably is not to be sheltered under the first clause of our text: it must rather vindicate itself by the second, "as much as in you lieth;" and then there is a question which none but God can decide, how far the infirmity, which caused unnecessary division, was sinful, and how far unavoidable.

But whatever may be determined in regard of any particular case of an infraction of peace, the general rule, already stated, is manifestly correct, that whatever is not fundamental should be given up for the sake of peace; but that there must be war and separation, if, in maintaining peace, we have to compromise truth. We admit indeed that there will be difficulty in applying this rule; for since the Bible nowhere divides doctrines into those which are fundamental, and those which are not, there may be difference of opinion as to



the class to which a certain truth belongs, and, therefore, also doubt as to whether it should be enforced at the risk of a schism. But if Scripture have not made a division of its truths, there are some which manifestly belong to the very essence of christianity; whilst others, though full of worth and instruction, are as manifestly subordinate, and fill a lower place in the christian economy. There are points on which difference of opinion may be safely permitted, and others on which unanimity is indispensable. There can, for example, be no sufficient reason for breaking the bond of peace in the matter of predestination; the members of a church may abide in perfect harmony, though some hold, and others do not, the doctrine of personal election. But if the debated point be the divinity of Christ, or the impossibility of justification except through his merits, there must be unanimity, at whatever cost obtained. Christianity is nothing if these points be denied; and therefore must a christian church, if it would not forfeit its character, separate boldly from all by whom they are rejected.

It might justly be expected from us, under ordinary circumstances, that we should examine, in greater detail, and with more precision, where the point lies at which peace can be preserved only by compromising principle. But the occasion requires us to speak with peculiar reference to Popery and the English Reformation. And I, for one, am glad to avail myself of the opportunity. I cannot put away the persuasion, that there has been amongst protestants a growing ignorance and indifference with regard to points in dispute between the Reformed Church and the Papal; and a strengthening opinion that the two, after all, differ in little that is vital. And this degeneracy of protestantism has given encouragement to popery; so that the false system, against which our fathers rose manfully up, and in expelling which they perilled substance and life, has been putting forth tokens of strength and expansion. If this be true, great and manifest is the need, that you be reminded of your privileges, and warned against "the man of sin;" and I could not feel justified in neglecting an op-

portunity of addressing you specifically as protestants.

Now we have selected our text in preference to many which might seem more appropriate, because we consider that every point, on which it is important that your minds be strengthened or informed, is involved in the question, can we, as disciples of Christ, live peaceably with Rome? "If it be possible," saith the apostle, "as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men." Apply this rule to a church; and then, as we have shown you, it undoubtedly demands that there be nothing of schism or separation, so long as principles are not sacrificed for the sake of keeping peace. It warrants us in nothing that can be called a rending of the visible church, if we cannot prove that we have reached the point at which union is no longer possible; at which, that is, if union be preserved, it must be at the expense of conscience, and with mortal injury to truth. And therefore our text requires us, if we would vindicate any separation—such, for instance, as that of the English church from the Roman—to prove, by most rigid demonstration, that separation had become absolutely a duty; and that, if it had been avoided in order to preserve peace, there would have been a surrender of the principles of the Gospel of Christ. Thus we are thrown on examining the reasons which led our forefathers to break off communion with the Roman catholic church, and which justify our own refusal to give to that church the right hand of fellowship. We need hardly observe that these reasons cannot be expounded, save by a statement of the doctrines of popery, as contrasted with those of protestantism; so that, in proving to you that the Reformation involved no disobedience to the precept of our text, we shall inform or remind you of those great points of difference which separate between our own church and the papal. It will be well, however, that before entering on the inquiry thus suggested, we take notice of the common accusation, that we were guilty of schism at the Reformation, and continue chargeable with this guilt, so long as we return not into the bosom of the Roman catholic church. We shall, therefore, make it our business to en-

deavor, in the first place, to show you that there was no schism, properly so called, in our separation from Rome; in the second place, to prove to you that the separation was demanded, and is still justified by the corruptions of Rome.

Now it is one of the great doctrines of popery, as you must all be aware, that the pope, who is the bishop of the Roman church, is the head also of the universal church of Christ, so that he is vested with supreme authority over all bishops and pastors in every section of the earth. This pretended supremacy of the pope we utterly reject; declaring that it can find no syllable of vindication in the Bible, and maintaining it to be a modern and insolent assumption, of which no trace can be found in the early ages of christianity. The Bible no where hints that there was to be such an universal head of the church as the pope professes to be; and centuries elapsed before the bishops of Rome discovered, that, as St. Peter's successors, they had right to this universal lordship. We contend, therefore, against the doctrine of papal supremacy as utterly un sanctioned, whether by Scripture or antiquity; and we maintain that the pope could have had no power, except by usurpation, over the branch of Christ's church established in this land. He indeed claimed a power, and, during the long night of ignorance, the claim was conceded. But we utterly deny that he had right to any power, because we utterly deny that, as bishop of Rome, he was vested with authority over other parts of Christ's church. Whatever his sway in his own district, England was no part of that district; and if England, in her ignorance, had given him power, England, when better taught, did but justly in withdrawing that power. Hence there was nothing which, with the least show of justice, could be called schism, in the separation of the English church from the Roman. There might have been schism, had the doctrine of Roman catholics been true, that the pope is the universal head of the church; for then would the reformers have withdrawn an allegiance which they were required to yield, and detached themselves from the visible body of Christ. It is another question,

what would have been their duty under such circumstances; we now only state that, before the charge of schism, properly so called, can be substantiated, popery must be proved true, in the article of the universal headship of the pope; for unless this be true, there could be nothing schismatical in England's refusing to acknowledge any longer the authority of the Roman bishop, and re-establishing the supremacy of her own king in all causes, ecclesiastical and civil.

And we need not say that we are not much troubled with the accusation of schism, so long as it cannot be made good till popery have been proved true. It is somewhat bold to call us schismatics, when the name takes for granted what we contend against as false, that the Roman Catholic Church includes the whole visible. And we wish you to observe, that there were no spiritual ties which necessarily bound together England and Rome. We were not indebted to Rome for our christianity. Whatever may be thought of the opinion which has been supported with great learning and ability, that St. Paul himself preached the Gospel in Britain, and ordained a bishop here before there was any in Rome; so that the Anglican Church would be older than the Roman; it is, at least, certain that christianity made its way into these islands at a very early period; and that, when the missionaries of Rome first visited our shores, they found a christian church already established, a church whose bishops refused submission to the pope, though, in process of time, that submission was yielded. On what principle, then, is it to be maintained, that the English church was so integral a portion of the Roman, that there could be no separation without the guilt of schism? The English church had been independent, governed by its own officers, and having no connection but that of a common brotherhood with other parts of Christ's visible body. And Rome came down upon it in subtilty and pride, putting forward arrogant claims, and asking to be received as supreme in every ecclesiastical cause. The times were those in which moral darkness and mental were fast pervading the earth, and which therefore favored the bold pretensions of



ambitious and unprincipled pontiffs. And no marvel, if England yielded with the rest of Christendom; so that a church, founded in apostolic days, and owing no allegiance to any foreign power, joined in the false, though almost universal, confession, that the pope was the vicegerent of Christ, endowed with unbounded authority over every ecclesiastical section.

But at length God mercifully interposed, and raised up men with power and disposition to examine for themselves, and with intrepidity to proclaim the result of their searchings. In one country after another of Europe arose those who had prayerfully studied the Bible, and who were too zealous for truth, too warm lovers both of God and of man, to keep silent as to an assumption which Scripture did not sanction. And England was not without her worthies and champions in this great and general struggle for emancipation. There were those amongst her children who felt that she crouched beneath a yoke which God had not ordained, and who, therefore, summoned her to rise, and reassert her independence. And when she hearkened to the call, and rose up in the majesty of a strength which still commands our wonder, and shook from her the yoke of papal oppression, declaring that the Roman Pontiff had no authority within her coasts—what did she do but resume a power which ought never to have been delegated, and resist a claim which ought never to have been admitted? In the season of ignorance, when all Europe bent to the spiritual tyrant, she had made herself subject to the bishop of Rome; and, therefore, in the season of greater knowledge, when she joined other lands in daring to be free, she did nothing but take what was inalienably her own, what she had parted with in blindness, but what, all the while, could not lawfully be surrendered. We can admit then nothing in her separation from the Roman church which approximates to schism. She had committed a grievous error, as a church, in acknowledging the pope's supremacy; but there could be nothing like schism in her correcting the error, and denying that supremacy. And there may be employed all the resources of casuistry on this matter,

the partisans of Rome laboring to brand the reformers as schismatics; but until it can be proved, proved from Scripture and the early fathers, that there is no other church but the Roman, and that the head of this church has been ordained of God to be supreme throughout christendom in every ecclesiastical matter, it will never be proved that our ancestors in the sixteenth century would have been justified in continuing allegiance to the pope; never therefore, that, in transferring that allegiance to their own anointed king, they were unmindful of the precept, "If it be possible, live peaceably with all men."

Now we have endeavored to set this fact under the most simple point of view, because it is easy to involve it in mystery and perplexity. The act, by which we separated from the church of Rome, and by which, therefore, if by any, we are guilty of schism, was the act by which we denied that the pope had any authority whatsoever in this kingdom. It was not, strictly speaking, by our denouncing image worship, by our denying transubstantiation, by our rejecting the mediation of angels and saints, that we ceased to be a part of the Roman church: that which made us a part of this church was the acknowledging the pope as the ecclesiastical head; and that which dissolved our union with this church, was the refusing to continue such acknowledgment. Had the Roman church been free from all the corruptions to which we have referred, holding no erroneous doctrine but that of papal supremacy, separation would still have been a duty: there would still have been the usurpation of our monarch's power by the pope, and it could not have been schism to restore that power to its right owner.

But we will now wave the question of schism: we have to examine, in the second place, the chief points of difference between the reformed church and the Roman, that you may be reminded of the reasons of protestants for refusing peace with papists. We formally separated from Rome, as we have just explained, by refusing to acknowledge the supremacy of the pope: but it was chiefly by rejecting certain doctrines and observances, and by standing up for truth in opposition to

error, that we became emphatically a reformed church, and gained the honorable title of protestants.

We do not deny, and this we must state clearly before entering on the errors of Rome, that the Roman catholic church is a true and apostolic church—her bishops and priests deriving their authority, in an unbroken line, from Christ and his apostles. Accordingly, if a Roman catholic priest renounce what we count the errors of popery, our church immediately receives him as one of her ministers, requiring no fresh ordination before she will allow him to officiate at her altars, though she grants not the like privilege to other claimants of the ministerial office. If his ordination be not, in every sense, valid, neither is our own: for if we have derived ours from the apostles, it has been through the channel of the Roman catholic church; so that, to deny the transmission of authority in the popish priesthood since the reformation, would be to deny it before; and thus should we be left without any ordination which could be traced back to the apostles. Hence there is no question, that, on the principles of an Episcopal church, the Roman catholic is a true branch of Christ's church, however grievously corrupted and fearfully deformed. It is a true church, inasmuch as its ministers have been duly invested with authority to preach the word and dispense the sacraments: it is a true church moreover, inasmuch as it has never ceased to "hold the head, which is Christ," and to acknowledge the fundamental truth of our religion, that Jesus, God as well as man, died as a propitiation for the sins of the world.

And all this was distinctly recognized by the reformers of the English church, whatever it may have been by those of other countries. They made no alteration in the constitution of the church: they saw in the Roman catholic church the true foundation and framework of a church; but they saw also that on this foundation had been laid, and into this framework had been woven, many and gross errors, which were calculated to destroy the souls of its members. And it was to the work of removing these errors that they strenuously gave themselves—not wishing

to meddle with the foundation, or to destroy the framework; but simply to take away those human inventions and superstitious observances, beneath which genuine christianity was almost hidden, or rather almost buried. And so blessed were they of God with singular discretion, as well as courage, that they achieved the noble result of a church holding all that is apostolic in doctrine, without letting go one jot of what is apostolic in government. They achieved the result, the only result at which, as reformers, they could lawfully aim, of making the church, both in creed and in discipline, what the church had been in primitive times; removing from it whatsoever had not the sanction of Scripture and antiquity, and retaining whatsoever had. And thus there sprang from their labors what might literally be called a reformed church—not a new church, as is more strictly the name of many of those which bear the title of reformed—but a reformed church, the old, the original church, stripped of those incrustations, and freed from those pollutions, which had fastened upon it during a long night of ignorance. Theirs was the work of renovating an ancient cathedral, majestic even in decay, presenting the traces of noble architecture, though in ruins on this side, and choked with rubbish on that. They did not attempt to batter down the walls, and plough up the foundations, of the venerable edifice, and then to erect on the site a wholly modern structure. They were better taught, and better directed. They removed, with the greatest carefulness and diligence, the coating from the beautiful pillars which men had daubed with "untempered mortar;" and they swept away buttresses which did but disfigure, without sustaining the building; and, above all, they opened the windows which ignorance, or superstition, had blocked up; and then the rich light of heaven came streaming down the aisles, and men flocked to its courts to worship the one God through the one Mediator, Christ. And therefore, as we would again tell you, were they the reformers, and nothing more than the reformers of the church. You sometimes hear or read of the fathers of the English church, the name being given to the



reformers. But the name is most falsely applied. The fathers of the English church are the apostles and those apostolic men, who lived in the early days of christianity, and handed down to us what was held as truth, when there were the best means of ascertaining and defining it. We acknowledge no modern fathers: it were to acknowledge a modern birth. We claim to be the ancient church: we fasten on the Roman catholic the being the modern—the modern, not in constitution, for therein we have both the same date, and that date apostolic; but the modern in a thousand innovations on genuine christianity—christianity as preached by Christ and St. Paul—christianity as exhibited by the writers of the first four centuries of the church.

But it is here that we reach the gist of the question: we must set before you certain doctrines held by the Roman church, and denounced by the reformed; or state particulars in which the two differ with regard to the same article of faith.

We have referred already to the pretended infallibility of the Roman church, and shall only farther say, that Rome must give up this doctrine ere there can be peace: it has no foundation in Scripture, for St. Paul addresses the Roman church as liable to err: it is contradicted by facts, for different popes and councils have decreed opposite things; and it is dangerous and deadly, as giving the divine sanction to every error which an ignorant mortal may adopt, and to every practice which a vicious may enjoy. We protest, next, against the Romish doctrine of justification, declaring it unscriptural, and therefore fatal to the soul. This doctrine is, that our own inherent justice is the formal cause of our justification: the Council of Trent having pronounced any one accused, who should say that men are justified, either by the imputation of Christ's righteousness alone, or only by the remission of sins; or who should maintain that the grace by which we are justified is the favor of God alone. And as to merit, which is closely associated herewith, a famous cardinal has delivered this noted decision, "A just man hath, by a double title, right to the same glory; one by the merits of Christ

imparted to him by grace, another by his own merits."\* Can we, without treachery to the souls of men, be at peace with Rome, whilst she inculcates tenets directly at variance with those which are the essence of christianity, that we are "justified freely by God's grace," "through faith," and "not of works;" and that "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord?" We protest further against the Romish doctrine of the insufficiency of what we receive as the canonical Scriptures, of the authority of the Apocrypha and of traditions. The papists hold, according to the decrees of the same Council of Trent, that there is not expressly contained in Scripture all necessary doctrine, either concerning faith or manners: we reject the tenet as blasphemous, seeing that a curse is pronounced by the Bible on all who shall add to it, or take from it; and thus God's Spirit hath decided the sufficiency of Scripture. The papists receive the apocryphal books as canonical: the voice of antiquity is against them, the internal evidence is against them, and we protest against the reception, because we know that the apocryphal books may be brought in support of doctrines which we repudiate as false, and of practices which we deprecate as impious. And as to traditions, of which the Council of Trent decreed, that they must be received with no less piety and veneration than the Scriptures, they may be mightily convenient for papists, because a precept can be produced with the authority of a revelation, whenever a falsehood is to be made current for truth: but we utterly reject these unwritten traditions, because, at best, they are impeachments of the sufficiency of Scripture, and because they afford every facility for the establishment of error under the seeming sanction of God.

But this is not all: our protest yet extends itself on the right hand and on the left. The papists maintain, that, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, there is a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into Christ's body, and of the whole substance of the wine into his blood. This is their doctrine

\* Bellarmine, quoted by Bishop Hall.

of transubstantiation. Against this doctrine we protest, not only because there is a contradiction to our senses, for taste, and touch, and sight assure us that the consecrated bread is still bread, and the consecrated wine still wine; but because it overthrows the truth of Christ's humanity: it makes his body infinite and omnipresent: it makes that body to be on the earth, when Scripture declares it to be in heaven; and if it thus interfere with the fact of Christ's humanity, affecting vitally the truth of his being a man like ourselves, how can we admit it without destroying the Gospel? The papists further hold in regard of the Lord's Supper, that therein is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and dead, so that the priests, daily ministering, make a fresh oblation of the Son of God to the Father. This is what is styled the sacrifice of the mass: we reject it as unscriptural, for we know that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;" we reject it as impious, because Christ, as the great High Priest, offered up himself, and no inferior priest might present so illustrious a victim.

Neither is it in this respect only that the papists interfere with the mediatorial office of Christ. What is to be said of the invocation of angels and saints? The Romish Church declares, according to the creed of Pius IV. that "the saints who reign with Christ are to be venerated and invoked, and that they offer prayers to God for us." Nay, has not the present pope, in a letter circulated amongst the clergy of his church, styled the Virgin Mary his greatest confidence, even the whole foundation of his hope? And shall we not protest against a church, and that, too, vehemently and incessantly, shall we make peace with a church which thus, disguise and varnish and extenuate as you will, exalts sinful mortals to a participation in the great office of Jesus, introduces virtually a long train of intercessors, and thus demolishes the mighty and life-giving truths, that there is "one mediator between God and man," and that, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous?" We must go further. We must not hesitate to charge the

Roman church with idolatry; though many, who have often sworn solemnly to their belief that its practices were idolatrous, now hold such opinion to be the offspring of nothing but ignorance and illiberality. The Council of Trent decreed, that the images and relics of Christ and the saints are to be duly honored, venerated, or worshipped: and no one who has visited Roman catholic countries can be ignorant how faithfully the decree is obeyed. We call this idolatry. O no, is the retort: the worship is not rendered to the image, but only to the being whom the image represents. Be it so: this is nevertheless idolatry. The Israelites when they bowed before the golden calf, professedly designed to worship the true God, not the image; but they were slain with a great slaughter, as impious idolaters. Besides, this is mere subterfuge: the image itself is worshipped. Else, why has one image a greater sanctity than another? Why are pilgrimages to be made to our Lady's chapel at Loretto, rather than to any other chapel of our Lady, except that the Virgin's image in the one is more precious and powerful than that in the other? and if it be thus thought that there is a virtue resident in the image, of what use is it to say that the image is reckoned nothing, and receives no honor? The second commandment is broken, distinctly and flagrantly broken, by the Roman catholics: and as worshippers of the one true God, who has declared himself "a jealous God," we protest against a church which enjoins that incense be burnt, and prayers made, before images; and we demand of her that she sweep from her temples the "silver and gold, the work of men's hands," ere there can be place for our obeying the precept of St. Paul, "If it be possible, live peaceably with all men."

And what shall we say more? for the time would fail us to tell of multiplied sacraments; of the cup denied to the laity, though Christ said to his disciples, "drink ye all of it;" of indulgences, 'impiously imagined deceits, whereby men may be delivered from purgatory, a place which exists only in their own fancies and creeds; of the distinctions between venial sins and mortal, fine wire-drawn subtillies, con-



trary to the scriptural definitions of sin, and calculated to lull men's consciences to sleep in the midst of their crimes; of penances which are meritorious, of relics which are miraculous; of the shutting up the Bible from the common people; of prayers in an unknown tongue; of fastings which have no authority in revelation, and of prohibitions which necessarily lead to licentiousness. We will not say that there is the same degree of error in each of the particulars thus rapidly enumerated; nor that the error, where-soever it exists, is equally fundamental and fatal. But we can confidently affirm that there is cause, in each case, for the protest of every lover of pure christianity; that in none can the error be deemed harmless; yea, that in none can it be shown other than full of peril to the soul. And whatever may be your opinion on one or another point of difference between the churches, we may safely refer it to the decision of every upholder of scriptural truth, whether the catalogue which we have given of Roman Catholic errors and corruptions, does not justify the reformers in having commenced, and ourselves in continuing, separation from the disciples of popery? We have shown you doctrines completely counter to that of justification by faith, ascribing a strength to man's powers, and a worth to his actions, which would almost prove him competent to the saving himself. We have brought before you tenets irreconcilable with the truth of the Redeemer's complex person, which assail his office as Mediator, and strip his propitiation of power by representing it as daily repeated. We have told you of violence done to the sanctity of revelation by the honor given to human fable and tradition, of idolatrous worship, of extenuated sin, and of authority, impudently assumed, to remit the punishments and dispense the rewards of futurity. And this is popery. This is popery, not as libelled, and maligned, and traduced by sworn foes, but as described, and defined, in its own authorised and unrescinded documents. This is popery, the religion against which, if you will believe modern liberalism, it is little better than bigotry to object, and which approaches so nearly to

protestantism, that a little mutual accommodation might remove every difference,

Yes, it may approach nearly to protestantism, but only to protestantism as it exists in days of indifference and heartlessness, and for which the far truer name were infidelity. Not the protestantism of Luther, and Cranmer, and Ridley, and Hooper, and all the noble army of martyrs. Not the protestantism of the worthies of the purest days of christianity. Not the protestantism of the holy fathers of the church. Not the protestantism, we are bold to use the expression, of Christ and his apostles. Yes, the protestantism for which we contend, and which we declare as incapable of alliance with popery as the east of junction with the west, is the protestantism of Christ and his apostles. The reformed religion is no novelty: if it can be proved a day younger than Christ and his apostles, away with it from the earth as a pernicious delusion. It was no invention of Luther and his fellow-laborers. The Roman catholics indeed would taunt us with the recent origin of our faith, as though it had sprung up in the sixteenth century, whilst their own is hallowed by all the suffrages of antiquity. There was never a more insolent taunt, and never a more unwarranted boast. Ours, as we have already intimated, is the old religion, theirs is the new. Ours is, at least, as old as the Bible; for it has not a single tenet which we do not prove from the Bible. But theirs must be younger than the Bible; for where in the Bible is the Bible said to be insufficient, and where is the pope declared supreme and infallible, and where is sin divided into mortal and venial, and where are the clergy forbidden to marry, and where are images directed to be worshipped, and where is the church intrusted with the granting indulgences? There is not a solitary article of protestantism, in support of which we are not ready to appeal to the canonical Scriptures, and the writings of the early fathers; there are a hundred of popery, which papists themselves are too wise to rest on such an appeal. They may ask us, where was your religion before Luther? and our reply is, in the word of the living God, in the creeds of apostles and

apostolical men, and in the practice of those witnesses, who, in every age, refused to participate in the abominations of Rome. But we ask them, where was your religion before such or such an aspiring pontiff put forth such or such a doctrine or claim? We challenge the documents. We fix the doctrine of the papal supremacy to the sixth century—let them prove it older if they can; of seven sacraments to the twelfth century—let them prove it older if they can; of transubstantiation to the thirteenth century—let them prove it older if they can. And yet protestantism is the spurious manufacture of a late date, whilst popery is the venerable transmission from the first year of the christian era. Yes, all that is true in popery has been transmitted from the earliest days of christianity; but all that is true in popery makes up protestantism. Popery is protestantism mutilated, disguised, deformed, and overlaid with corrupt additions; protestantism is popery restored to its first purity, cleansed from false glosses, and freed from the rubbish accumulated on it by ages of superstition.

We recur then to our former assertion, and declare that the protestantism for which we contend as irreconcilable with popery, is nothing else than the protestantism of Christ and his apostles. And the protestantism of Christ and his apostles can have no peace with popery. We would, if possible, "live peaceably with all men," and, therefore, with the Roman church. But it is not possible. We cannot surrender justification by faith. We cannot multiply mediators. We cannot bow down before images. We cannot believe bread to be flesh, and wine to be blood. We cannot ascribe to a fallible man the unerring wisdom of the one living God. And, therefore, it is not possible. No; if popery regain its lost power, let it not be through our giving it the right hand of fellowship. Let it wrest back ecclesiastical endowments; let it rekindle the fires of persecution; let it be legislated into might by time-serving concessions; but never let us be silent, as though we thought popery to be truth; never supine, as though we counted its errors unimportant.

A righteous ancestry felt the impossi-

bility of peace with Rome; and though they could wage the war only at the risk of substance and life, yet did they manfully throw themselves into the struggle; for far dearer to them was "truth as it is in Jesus," than wealth, or honor, or the quiet comforts of home; and seeing that this truth was disguised or denied, they could not rest till it was fully exhibited, and boldly proclaimed. Their ashes are yet in our land; our cities and villages are haunted by their memories; but shall it be said that their spirit hath departed, and that we value not the privileges purchased for us by their blood! Children as we are of men who discovered, and acted on the discovery, that to remain at peace with Rome were to offer insult to God, we will not prove our degeneracy by lapsing into an alliance which they abhorred as sacrilegious. The echo of their voices—trumpet-tongued as they were, so that, at the piercing call, Europe shook as with an earthquake—still lingers on our mountains and in our valleys; still is it syllabling to us that popery is the predicted apostacy of the latter times; still is it discoursing of Rome as the mystic Babylon of the Apocalypse, and reiterating the summons, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Thus it is reminding us—though, if there were no such echo, there is speech enough in reason, speech enough in revelation—that, in separating from the Romish church, we are not forgetful of the duty of endeavoring to keep "the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace;" but that, in refusing communion with that church, and requiring her to renounce her abominations ere we will keep back our protest, we obey to the utmost the precept of the apostle, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Now we have been the more ready to embrace an opportunity of bringing protestantism before you in contrast with popery, because we believe that the Roman catholic religion has been rapidly gaining ground in this country. There must be great inattention to what is passing on all sides, if any of you be unaware that popery is on the increase. It is easy to meet statements



in regard to the growing number of papal chapels and colleges, by saying that the growth is but proportioned to the growth of population, and therefore does not indicate any influx of proselytes. Of course, a reply such as this is of no worth, except as borne out by facts; and we thoroughly believe, that, the more carefully you examine, the more you will find that there is a greater growth of Popery than you had right to expect from the growth of population. When you have made due allowance for the increased numbers in Roman catholic families, there will be a large surplus, only to be referred to a successful system of proselytism. It should suffice to convince you of this, to observe, as you easily may, that Roman catholic chapels are rising in neighborhoods where there is no Roman catholic population; and that, in cases where the chapel has been reared, in hopes that a congregation would be formed, the hopes have not been altogether falsified by the event.

What are we to say to this? Men would indeed persuade you that the enlarged intelligence of the times, the diffusion of knowledge, and the increase of liberality, are an ample security against the revival, to any great extent, of a system so absurd and repulsive as popery. But they quite forget, when they hastily pronounce that popery has no likelihood of being revived in an enlightened age, that it is emphatically the religion of human nature; and that he, who can persuade himself of its truth, passes into a position the most coveted by the mass of our race, that in which sin may be committed, with a thorough security that its consequences may be averted. We find no guarantee against the reinstatement of popery, in the confessed facts of a vast outstretch of mind, and of a general developement of the thinking faculties of our people. It is an axiom with us, that people must have some kind of religion; they cannot so sepulchre their immortality, that it will never struggle up, and compel them to think of provision for the future. And when a population shall have grown vain of its intelligence, and proud of its knowledge; when, by applying universally the machinery of a mere mental education, and pervading a country

with literature rather than with Scripture, you shall have brought men into the condition, O too possible, of those who think it beneath them to inquire after God; then, do we believe, the scene will be clear for the machinations of such a system as the papacy. The inflated and self-sufficient generation will feel the need of some specific for quieting conscience. But they will prefer the least spiritual, and the least humiliating. They will lean to that, which, if it insult the understanding, bribes the lusts, and buys reason into silence by the immunities which it promises. It is not their wisdom which will make them loathe popery. Too wise to seek God prayerfully and humbly in the Bible, they will be as open to the delusion which can believe a lie, as the ignorant to the imposition which palms off falsehood for truth. They will not want God, but a method of forgetting him, which shall pass at the same time for a method of remembering him. This is a definition of popery, that masterpiece of Satan, constructed for two mighty divisions of humankind, the men who would be saved by their merits, and the men who would be saved in their sins. Hence, if a day of great intellectual darkness be favorable for popery, so may be a day of great intellectual light. We may as well fall into the pit with our eyes dazzled, as with our eyes blindfolded: ignorance is no better element for a false religion than knowledge, when it has generated conceit of our own powers; and intellect, which is a defender, when duly honored and employed, becomes a betrayer, when idolized as omnipotent.

You are told moreover, and this is one of the most specious of the deceits through which popery carries on its work, that the Roman catholic religion is not what it was; that it took its complexion from the times; and that tenets, against which protestants loudly exclaim, and principles which they indignantly execrate, were held only in days of ignorance and barbarism, and have long since fled before the advance of civilization. And very unfair and ungenerous, we are told, it is, to rake up the absurdities and cruelties of a rude and uninformed age, and to charge them on the creed of men in our own

generation, who detest them as cordially as ourselves. Be it so: we are at all events dealing with an infallible church: and unless the claim to infallibility be amongst the things given up, we are at a loss to know how this church can so greatly have changed; how, since she never goes wrong, she can renounce what she believed, and condemn what she did. And the Roman church is not suicidal enough to give up her claim to infallibility: but she is sagacious enough to perceive that men are willing to be deceived, that an excess of false charity is blinding them to facts, and that there is abroad amongst them such an idolatry of what they call liberal, that they make it a point of honor to believe good of all evil, and perhaps evil of all good. Of this temper of the times, is the Roman church, marvellously wise in her generation, adroitly availing herself: and so well has she plied men with the specious statement that she is not what she was, that they are rather covering her with apologies for their inconsiderate bigotry, than thinking of measures to resist her advances. But there is no change in popery. The system is the same, intrinsically, inherently the same. It may assume different aspects to carry different purposes, but this is itself a part of popery: there is the variable appearance of the chameleon, and the invariable venom of the serpent. Thus in Ireland, where the theology of Dens is the recognized text-book of the Roman catholic clergy, they will tell you, when there is any end to be gained, that popery is an improved, and modified, and humanized thing: whereas, all the while, there is not a monstrous doctrine, broached in the most barbarous of past times, which this very text-book does not uphold as necessary to be believed, and not a foul practice, devised in the midnight of the world, which it does not enjoin as necessary to be done. Make peace, if you will, with popery, receive it into your senate, shrine it in your churches, plant it in your hearts; but be ye certain, certain as that there is a heaven above you and a God over you, that the popery thus honored and embraced, is the very popery that was degraded and loathed by the holiest of your fathers, the very popery—the same in haughti-

ness, the same in intolerance—which lorded it over kings, assumed the prerogatives of Deity, crushed human liberty, and slew the saints of God.

O that England may be convinced of this, before taught it by fatal experience. It may not yet be too late. She has tampered with popery: in many respects she has patronized popery, giving it, by her compromises and concessions, a vantage-ground which its best wishers could hardly have dared to expect; but, nevertheless, it may not yet be too late. Let protestants only awoken to a sense of the worth of their privileges, privileges so long enjoyed that they are practically forgotten, and this land may remain, what for three centuries it hath been, the great witness for scriptural truth, the great centre of scriptural light. There is already a struggle. In Ireland especially, popery so wrestles with protestantism that there is cause for fear that falsehood will gain mastery. And we call upon you to view the struggle in its true light. It is not to be regarded as a struggle between rival churches, each desiring the temporal ascendancy. It is not a contest for the possession of tithe, for right to the mitre, for claim on the benefice. It is a contest between the christianity of the New Testament, and the christianity of human tradition and corrupt fable—a contest, therefore, whose issue is to decide whether the pure Gospel shall have footing in Ireland.

There is, there will be, a struggle; and our counsel to you individually is, that you examine well the tenets of protestantism, and possess yourselves of the grounds on which it is impossible that we live peaceably with Rome. If you belong to a reformed church, acquaint yourselves with the particulars in which the reformation consisted, that you may be able to give reasons for opposition to popery. And when convinced that they are not unimportant points on which protestants differ from papists, let each, in his station, oppose the march of popery, oppose it by argument, by counsel, by exhortation, by prayer. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." By the memory of martyrs, by the ashes of confessors, by the dust of a thousand saints, we conjure you to be stanch in defence of your religion.



The spirits of departed worthies, who witnessed a good confession, and counted not their lives dear, so that truth might be upheld, bend down, one might think, from their lofty dwelling-place, and mark our earnestness in defending the faith "once delivered to the saints." O, if they could hear our voice, should it not tell them, that there are yet many in the land, emulous of their zeal, and eager to tread in their steps; ready, if there come a season big with calamity, to gird themselves for the defence of protestantism in her last asylum, and to maintain in the strength of the living God, that system which they wrought out with toil, and cemented with blood? Yes, illustrious immortals! ye died not in vain. Mighty group! there was lit up at your massacre a fire in those realms which is yet unextinguished; from father to son has the sacred flame been transmitted: and though, in the days of our security, that flame may have burnt with diminished lustre, yet

let the watchmen sound an alarm, and many a mountain top shall be red with the beacon's blaze, and the noble vault of your resting-place grow illumined with the flash. Repose ye in your deep tranquillity, spirits of the martyred dead! We know something of the worth of a pure Gospel, and a free Bible: and we will bind ourselves by the name of Him "who liveth and abideth for ever," to strive to preserve unimpaired the privileges bequeathed at such cost. The spirit of protestantism may have long lain dormant, but it is not extinct: it shall be found, in the hour of her church's peril, that there are yet bold and true-hearted men in England, who count religion dearer than substance; and who, having received from their fathers a charter of faith, stained with the blood of the holiest and the best, would rather dye it afresh in the tide of their own veins, than send it down, torn and mutilated, to their children.

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## SERMON V.

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### CHRISTIANITY A SWORD.

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"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Matthew, 10: 34.

When Isaiah predicted the birth of Messiah, "the Prince of Peace" was one of the titles which he gave to the coming deliverer. When angels announced to the shepherds that Messiah was born, they sang as their chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." At first sight, there scarcely seems to be thorough agreement between such a prediction, or such an announcement, and the declaration which Christ makes, in our text, with regard to his mission. Is it "the Prince

of Peace," the being whose entrance upon earth was hailed by the heavenly hosts as insuring peace to mankind, who proclaims that he had not come to send peace; but that, as though he were the warrior, all whose battles are "with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood," he had come to send a sword? Let it be observed at once, though your own minds will anticipate the remark, that it is common in Scripture to represent a person as doing that of which he may indeed be the occasion, but which is not effected by his

own will or agency. Sometimes, indeed, the action is ascribed to an individual who has not even been its occasion, whose only connection with the result has been the announcing that it should surely come to pass. Thus God says to Jeremiah, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to build, and to plant." Undoubtedly the prophet had no part in the demolition of our empire, and the aggrandizement of another. He was no agent in effecting the revolutions which he was commissioned to predict. All that he did was to proclaim a coming destruction, or a coming exaltation; and then he is said to have wrought what he merely announced.

You are moreover aware that the Bible often ascribes to God's authorship, what can only be referred to his permission; so that the Almighty seems represented as interfering to cause results, which we are bound to conclude that he simply allows. It cannot, therefore, excite surprise, for it quite consists with the ordinary phraseology of Scripture, that Christ should apparently announce, as the purpose of his mission, a result produced only by human perverseness. There can be nothing more easy of demonstration, than that the Gospel is a message of peace, that christianity is a system which, cordially received and fully obeyed, would diffuse harmony and happiness through all the world's families. And if it once be acknowledged that it is the design and tendency of the religion of Jesus to unite in close brotherhood, by uniting in the fellowship of "one faith and one baptism," the tribes and households of our race, there is an end of all debate on the fitness of appropriating to the Savior the name "Prince of Peace;" and we must search elsewhere than in the nature of the christian dispensation, for reasons why the sword, rather than the olive-branch, is ascendant upon earth.

We lay it down then as a position whose justice will be readily admitted, that our text announces a result, and not the design, of the introduction of christianity. Our Lord declares of himself, that he came not to send peace; but we are, notwithstanding, assured that he had left the throne of

his glory in order to reconcile this creation to God, and restore friendship between man and his Maker. We must conclude, therefore, that he is not speaking of the object of his mission, but only of the operation of a fatal and perverting power, resident in the creature, by which the greatest blessing may be turned into a curse. Christianity, in its own nature and tendencies, may be emphatically peace: but christianity, as clashing with corrupt passions, may be practically a sword, which, wounding and devastating, brings injury, and not benefit, to thousands. Hence, knowing by his prescience that disastrous consequences, chargeable altogether upon man, would follow the introduction of christianity, our Lord, who had come to send peace, might declare that he had come to send a sword—the only sense in which he sent the sword, being that of publishing doctrines which would excite the animosities of our nature against holiness and God.

But there are sundry inquiries suggested by our text, besides that of the sense in which the sending of the sword can be referred to him who came to send peace. We have introduced our subject with the foregoing remarks, in order to remove misapprehension as to the true cause of evils, which all must both observe and lament. We shall indeed see more clearly in the sequel whence these evils originate. But it is sufficient, at the outset of our discourse, to have shown summarily the unfairness of charging the consequences on the Author of Christianity; any blessing, whatever its beauty and brightness, may be abused by the recipient: but assuredly, when turned into an instrument of mischief, it is only in its original goodness that it can be ascribed to the Creator, and in its injuriousness wholly to the creature. This being premised, we design, in the first place, to consider our text as a prophecy; examining how Christ's words have been verified, and meeting such objections to the plan of God's dealings as the subject seems likely to suggest. We shall then endeavor, in the second place, to point out specifically the causes which have turned into a sword that, which, in its own nature, is emphatically peace.



Now you must all be familiar with the melancholy truth, that, from its first publication, christianity has been the occasion of discord and bloodshed. We might, perhaps, have been prepared to expect, that, whilst christianity strove to make head against the world's superstitions, and to dethrone heathenism, which had long held an undisputed sway, the passions and powers of interested millions would be excited against its preachers. It was quite natural, that, when there was published a religion at war with every other then dominant and approved, fierce efforts should be made to crush, by crushing its advocates, a system whose establishment must be the downfall of those which a long ancestry had bequeathed, and which every lust felt interested in upholding. Seeing that the worst passions of humanity had so much at stake, it might fairly have been calculated that so vast a revolution as that of the Roman empire exchanging paganism for, at least, nominal christianity, would not be effected without great private dissatisfaction, if not political disturbance. Accordingly, as we all know, persecutions of the most fearful description assailed the infant religion, designing, and almost effecting, its extinction. And when Satan, battling for an empire which it was the professed object of christianity to wrench away, sent forth all his emissaries, and stirred up all his agents, in order that, if possible, the very name of the crucified might be banished and lost, there was exhibited a spectacle which bore out to the letter the prediction of our text. They who traced the causes of massacres which devastated cities and provinces, and found that the christian religion had occasioned such outbreaks of violence, must have felt that Christ had spoken words as true as they were awful, when declaring that he had come, not to send peace, but a sword, on the earth.

It was, however, as we have already stated, fairly to have been expected, that, ere heathenism could be nationally displaced, and christianity substituted, there would be such public convulsion as would bring distress and death on many of the professors of our faith. The prophecy becomes not unlooked for in its fulfilment, until

christianity had gained ascendancy, and kingdoms professed themselves evangelized. It might have been supposed—at least until the principles of christianity had been narrowly sifted—that, when the religion became professedly that of all the members of a community, the sword would be sheathed, and peace be the instant produce of sameness of faith. But alas, the persecutions by which paganism strove to annihilate christianity, are more than rivalled in fierceness by those of which christians have been, at once, the authors and objects. The darkest page in the history of mankind is perhaps that on which are registered the crimes that have sprung from the religious differences of christendom. It were a sickening detail, to count up the miseries which may be traced to these differences. Our very children are familiar with the history of times when Europe shook as though with an earthquake, and when a haughty and tyrannical church devoted all to execration and death who dared to think for themselves, or to take the Bible as their standard of faith. Our own land became a battle-plain, on which was carried on the struggle for religious freedom; heresy, as the bold confession of truth was insolently termed, marked out thousands of our forefathers for the stake or the scaffold. In this did christianity differ broadly from those false systems of theology which had been set up in the long night of heathenism; these systems were tolerant of each other, because, whatever their minor differences, they had the same mighty errors in common: but popery opposed itself to protestantism as vehemently as paganism had done to christianity; for, though both confessed Christ as a Mediator, the agreement of the two systems was as nothing to their separation on grand and fundamental tenets.

It is, then, but too true, that christianity has been a sword to christendom itself. The prophecy of our text has registered its fulfilment in the blood of the multitudes who, at various times, have been immolated on the altars of bigotry and ignorance. And if one of that angelic host which thronged the firmament of Bethlehem, and chanted of "peace on earth, good will towards

men," had taken the survey of christendom, when persecution was at its height, and the Romish hierarchy, backed by the kings and great ones of the earth, hunted down the revivers of apostolic doctrine and discipline, we may doubt whether he would have poured forth the same rich melody; whether, if left to frame his message from his observation, he would have announced that Christ had come to send peace, in the face of so tremendous a demonstration, that, practically at least, he had come to send a sword.

But you are not to suppose that the prediction of our text is accomplished in no days but those of intolerance and persecution. We learn, from the succeeding verse, that Christ specially referred to the family disturbances which his religion would occasion. "For I am come," saith he, "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." Here we have a prophecy, whose fulfilment is not limited to a past generation, but may be found every day in our own domestic histories. We live in times—and we are bound to thank God for the privilege—when the profession of that religion, which we believe to be true, exposes to no public danger, when the sword sleeps in its scabbard, and magistracy interferes with men's worship only to protect. But we cannot, nevertheless, be ignorant that there is a vast amount of private persecution, which, as laws do not prescribe, neither can they prevent; and that the introduction of genuine piety into a household is too frequently the introduction of discord and unhappiness. It may have fallen within the power of many of us to observe, how the peace of a family has apparently been broken up by religion; how its members, amongst whom there may have heretofore circulated all the charms of a thorough unanimity, have become divided and estranged, when certain of the number have grown careful of the soul. The making a profession of religion is often considered tantamount to actual rebellion; and then the announced result is literally brought round—the parents being set against the children, and the children against the parents. And over and

above the disunion thus unhappily introduced into households, it were idle to deny that piety is still exposed to much of harassing opposition, so that, although persecution no longer wears its more appalling forms, it is not possible to make bold confession of Christ, without thereby incurring obloquy and wrong. The cooling of friendship, the withdrawing of patronage, the misrepresentation of motives, the endeavor to thwart, and turn into ridicule—for all these must the man be prepared, who, in our own day, acts out his christianity; and he who should think that he might turn from worldliness to piety without losing caste, and alienating many who have loved and assisted him, would show that he had neither studied the character of our religion, nor gathered the testimony of experience. And whilst it can thus be maintained that the profession of that godliness which the Gospel enjoins, serves to break the closest links of association, dividing into almost irreconcilable parties those who have heretofore been as one in all the intercourses of life, it cannot be denied that christianity is still a sword, rather than a peacemaker upon earth; and that, whatever it may effect in days yet to come, the breaches which it now occasions in all ranks of society, attest that Christ spake as a true prophet when he uttered our text.

There is no necessity that, in exhibiting the present fulfilment of the prediction, we pass from christendom to the still broad domain of heathenism. It is undoubtedly a result of every missionary enterprise which makes head against idolatry, that deep and fierce passions are roused by its success. Those members of a tribe who embrace christianity, become objects of the inveterate hostility of those who adhere to the superstitious of their fathers. Thus is there acted over again, in the circumscribed neighborhood of a missionary settlement, something of that awful drama which once had the Roman world for its theatre. Heathenism still struggles to put down christianity, and idol-worshippers still regard as a personal enemy every convert from idolatry. Neither can we see reason to question, that, before any wide tract of paganism could become nominally



evangelized—we mean, of course, by the machinery of the present dispensation—so that the religion of Jesus should take the place of a degrading mythology, the worst passions of mankind would be banded in the withstanding, and that too by perfidy and violence, the exchange of falsehood for truth, of systems which patronize sensuality for one which enjoins the living soberly and righteously. And when christianity had triumphed—triumphed, be it observed, against an opposition resembling, in its vehemence, that which met our religion on its first publication—there would occur, we may believe, all those private, but distressing persecutions, which we trace and deplore amongst ourselves; so that, in prevailing on a heathen empire to throw away its idols, and erect the cross as its standard, you would have prevailed on it to receive into its families the fruitful source of dissensions, and to take as its portion the being rent into parties, whose variances must interrupt, if not destroy, all the harmony of society. Hence, it is still the melancholy truth, that, in sending christianity, you send a sword into a land. Until there be ushered in a season when religion shall take possession of every heart in an extended population, there will lie, to all appearance, an impossibility against the nominally evangelizing that population, without, at the same time, dividing and disturbing it; for the cross, whilst introduced only into the creed of a multitude, will excite their enmity against the few who give their affections to Him who died on it as a sacrifice.

But now we think it a question worthy the closest examination, whether, since christianity has all along proved a sword, the human race has been benefited, in temporal respects, by its propagation. We are not about to take into account the unspeakable advantages which this religion has conferred, when man is viewed as the heir of immortality. But there would be something so unlooked for in the fact, if it were fact, that the amount of present happiness had been diminished, or even not increased, by christianity, that we have right to demand stricter than ordinary proof, ere we receive it into our catalogue of truths. And we have no hesi-

tation in saying, that, in spite of its having been as a sword on the earth, christianity has done more to elevate the character, diminish the wretchedness, and augment the comforts of the nations who have received it as their faith, than was ever effected by the best systems of heathenism, whilst left free to attempt the improvement of human condition. We confess, of course, that much misery has been occasioned by the christian religion; and that, had this religion gained no footing in a land, there are many forms of disquietude which its inhabitants would have altogether escaped. Whilst christianity acts as a sword, there will be wounds, which, had there been no such weapon, would never have been inflicted. But the fair way of meeting the question is, to endeavor to strike a balance between the produced wretchedness and the produced happiness, and to determine on which side the preponderance lies.

And we could not wish a finer topic of christian advocacy than that of the immense blessing which the religion of Jesus has proved to mankind, if viewed simply in their temporal capacity. We are ready to keep futurity out of sight, with all its august and terrible mysteries. We will not meet the arraigner of christianity on ground from which he must instantly be driven, that of the revelation of immortality, which can be found only on the pages of Scripture. We will confine ourselves to the present narrow scene, and deal with man as though death were to terminate his being. And we do assert—and proofs unnumbered are at hand to make good the assertion—that the great civilizer of manners, the great heightener of morals, the soother of the afflicted, the patron of the destitute, the friend of the oppressed—this, from its first establishment, hath christianity been; and for this should it win the veneration of those who know not its worth, as the alone guide to man's final inheritance. We have only to contrast the most famous and refined of ancient nations with modern and christian, in order to assure ourselves, that, in all which can give dignity to our nature, in all which can minister to public majesty and private comfort, to independence of mind, security of property,

and whatsoever can either strengthen or ornament the frame-work of society, heathenism—great as may have been the progress in arts and sciences—must yield at once and immeasurably to christianity.

It is easy to upbraid our religion, because it hath fulfilled its own prophecies, and proved itself a sword; but what engine has been so efficient as this sword in accomplishing results which every lover of virtue admires, and every friend of humanity applauds? What hath banished gross vices from the open stage on which they once walked unblushingly, and forced them, where it failed to exterminate, to hide themselves in the shades of a disgraceful privacy? We reply, the sword christianity. What hath covered lands with buildings unknown in earlier and much-vaunted days, with hospitals, and infirmaries, and asylums? We answer, the sword christianity. What is gradually extirpating slavery from the earth, and bringing on a season, too long delayed indeed, but our approaches to which distance incalculably those of the best heathen times, when man shall own universally a brother in man, and dash off every fetter which cruelty hath forged, and cupidity fastened? We answer unhesitatingly, the sword christianity. What hath softened the horrors of war, rendering comparatively unheard of the massacre of the undefending, and the oppression of captives? What hath raised the female sex from the degraded position which they still occupy in the lands of a false faith? What hath introduced laws, which shield the weakest from injury, protect the widow in her loneliness, and secure his rights to the orphan? What hath given sacredness to every domestic relation, to the ties which bind together the husband and the wife, the parent and the child, the master and the servant; and thus brought those virtues to our firesides, the exile of which takes all music from that beautiful word *home*? To all such questions we have but one reply, the sword christianity. The determined foe of injustice in its every form; the denouncer of malice, and revenge, and pride, passions which keep the surface of society ever stormy and agitated; the nurse of genuine patriotism, because the enemy

of selfishness; the founder and upholder of noble institutions, because the teacher of the largest philanthropy—christianity has lifted our fallen humanity to a moral greatness which seemed wholly out of reach, to a station, which, compared with that occupied under the tyranny of heathenism, is like a new place amongst orders in creation.

And nothing is needed, in proof that we put forth no exaggerated statement, but that Christendom be contrasted with countries which have not yet received christianity. If you are in search of the attributes which give dignity to a state, of the virtues which shed lustre and loveliness over families, of what is magnificent in enterprise, refined in civilization, lofty in ethics, admirable in jurisprudence, you never turn to any but an evangelized territory, in order to obtain the most signal exhibition. And just in proportion as christianity now gains footing on a district of heathenism, there is a distinct improvement in whatever tends to exalt a nation, and bring comfort and respectability into its households. If we could but plant the cross on every mountain, and in every valley, of this globe, prevailing on a thousand tribes to cast away their idols, and hail Jesus Christ as "King of kings and Lord of lords," who doubts that we should have done infinitely more towards covering our planet with all the dignities and decencies of civilized life, than by centuries of endeavor to humanize barbarism without molesting superstition? We are clear as upon a point which needs no argument, because ascertained by experience, and which, if not proved by experience, might be established by irresistible argument, that, in teaching a nation the religion of Christ, we teach it the principles of government, which will give it fixedness as an empire, the sciences which will multiply the comforts, and the truths which will elevate the character, of its population. Thoroughly to christianize would be thoroughly to regenerate a land. And the poor missionary, who, in the simplicity of his faith, and the fervor of his zeal, throws himself into the waste of paganism, and there, with no apparent mechanism at his disposal for altering the condition of a savage com-



munity, labors at making Christ known to idolaters—why, we say of this intrepid wrestler with ignorance, that, in toiling to save the souls, he is toiling to develop the intellectual powers, reform the policy, and elevate in every respect the rank of the beings who engage his solitudes. The day on which a province of Africa hearkened to his summons, started from its moral debasement, and acknowledged Jesus as its Savior, would be also the day on which that province overstepped one half the interval by which it had been separated from civilized Europe, and went on, as with a giant's stride, towards its due place amongst nations.

So that however true it be, that, in sending christianity, you send a sword, into a land, we will not for a moment harbor the opinion, that christianity is no temporal blessing, if received by the inhabitants as their guide to immortality. It is a sword; and divided families, and clashing parties, will attest the keenness and strength of the weapon. But then it is also a sword, whose bright flash scatters the darkness of ages, and from whose point shrink away the corruption, the cruelty, and the fraud, which flourished in that darkness as their element. It is a sword: and it must pierce to the sundering many close ties, dissect many interests, and lacerate many hearts. But to wave this sword over a land is to break the spell fastened on it by centuries of ignorance; and to disperse, or, at least, to disturb, those brooding spirits which have oppressed its population, and kept down the energies which ennoble our race. And, therefore, are we nothing moved by the accusation, that christianity has caused some portion of misery. We deny not the truth of the charge: to disprove that truth would be to disprove christianity itself. The Founder prophesied that his religion would be a sword, and the accomplishment of the prophecy is one of our evidences that he came forth from God. But when men would go farther, when they would arraign christianity as having increased, on the whole, the sum of human misery, oh, then we have our appeal to the splendid institutions of civilized states, to the bulwarks of liberty which they have bravely thrown up, to the structures which they have

reared for the shelter of the suffering, and to their mighty advancements in equity, and science, and good order, and greatness. We show you the desert blossoming as the rose, and all because ploughed by the sword christianity. We show you every chain of oppression flying into shivers, and all because struck by the sword christianity. We show you the coffers of the wealthy bursting open for the succor of the destitute, and all because touched by the sword christianity. We show you the human intellect springing into manhood, reason starting from dwarfishness, and assuming magnificence of stature, and all because roused by the glare of the sword christianity. Ay, if you can show us feuds, and jealousies, and wars, and massacres, and charge them home on christianity as a cause, we can show you whatsoever is confessed to minister most to the welfare, and glory, and strength, and happiness of society, stamped with one broad impress, and that impress the sword christianity: and, therefore, are we bold to declare that the amount of temporal misery has been immeasurably diminished by the propagation of the religion of Jesus; and that this sword, in spite of produced slaughter and divisions, has been, and still is, as a golden sceptre, beneath which the tribes of our race have found a rest which heathenism knew only in its poetry; a freedom, and a security, and a greatness, which philosophy reached only in its dreams.

But now, having examined our text as a prophecy, we are briefly to investigate the causes which have turned into a sword that which, in its own nature, is emphatically peace. We shall not go particularly into the cases of heathenism persecuting christianity, and popery persecuting protestantism. Neither shall we speak of the tumults caused by the various heresies which, at different times, have sprung up in the church. When men's passions, prejudices, and interests are engaged on the side of error and corruption, it is unavoidable that the advocates of truth and purity will array against themselves hatred and hostility. But we will take the more ordinary case, in which there is no open conflict between theological systems and sects;

for this is perhaps the only one in which it is at all strange that divisions should be the produce of christianity. There is nothing about which men will not form different opinions: there is scarce an opinion too absurd to find advocates; especially when, if true, it would be advantageous; and philosophy, with its various schools, would be as much a sword as christianity with its various sects, if as much were dependent on its theories. But, waving these and other obvious considerations, let us see how the sword comes, where there is no direct collision between heresy and orthodoxy. We stated, as you will remember, in the introduction of our discourse, that christianity is a system, requiring nothing but cordial reception, in order to its bringing happiness to all the world's families. The truth of such statement will have been evidenced, if proof can be required, by our foregoing examination of the effects of christianity on society. We are warranted, by this examination, in asserting, as we have already in part done, that, if the Gospel were cordially received by every individual in a land, there would be banished from that land—we say not all unhappiness, for a nation of righteous would still be a nation of fallen men, and therefore lie exposed to sorrow and death—but certainly the chief part of that misery which may be traced to the feuds of our race, and which confessedly constitutes a great fraction of human wretchedness. The tendencies of christianity are palpably to the production of thorough unanimity; so that no one who studies the character of this religion, or observes its effects even where partially established, can fail, we think, to entertain the conviction, that a nation of real christians would be virtually a nation of affectionate brothers. But if the tendencies of christianity be thus to the producing peace, we must suppose that there are in man certain counter tendencies, and that the sword is forged from the opposition between the two. Neither can we be at a loss to discover those counter tendencies, and thus to account for the divisions and persecutions to which christianity will be sure to give rise, even where men seem agreed on its articles. The great thing

to be observed is, that there is a direct contrariety between the maxims of the world and those of the Gospel. It is impossible for a man to become a true believer in Jesus, without being immediately marked off from the great mass of his fellows. If the whole community went over with him to the discipleship of Christ, he would still have fellowship with all around, though widely different from that which he has heretofore had. But when he goes over alone, or with but few associates out of many, he detaches himself, and that too by a great wrench, from the society to which he has belonged. Between the world which still "lieth in wickedness," and that little company who "seek a better country, even a heavenly," the separation is so broad that Scripture exhibits the one as the old creation, and the other as the new. The man who acts on the principle that he is immortal, belongs, we had almost said, to a different race from the man whose conduct seems to proclaim him without belief in the deathlessness of the soul.

And if christianity, when cordially received, thus detach the recipient from all by whom it is only nominally received, you can have no difficulty in understanding how it acts virtually as a sword. The separation would be as nothing, if it were only of that kind which exists between the different ranks and classes of a community. You cannot liken to a sword the causes which separate the higher classes from the lower, because these classes, however distant from each other in external advantages, are linked by many ties; and their relative positions do not necessarily produce hostility of feeling. But the case is widely different when it is vital christianity which breaks into parties any set of men. The separation is a separation on principles; so that the conduct of the one party will unavoidably reprove that of the other, and, therefore, excite an enmity which will be sure to show itself in some open demonstration.

We take the case before referred to, that of a family, one of whose members is a christian inwardly, whilst the others are christians only outwardly. There may have been perfect harmony in this family up to the time at which vi-



tal christianity gained a place within its circle. But, afterwards, there must, we fear, be interruption of this harmony; the household can no longer present that aspect of unanimity, by which it once won the admiration of every beholder. And the reason of this change may be readily defined. Whilst there was nothing but nominal christianity, each member of the family did his part towards countenancing the rest in attachment to the perishable, and forgetfulness of the imperishable, and was upheld in return by the united proceedings of all those around him. There may have been great diversity of pursuit; the several individuals may have embraced different professions, and their respective tastes may have led them to seek enjoyment in unconnected channels. But forasmuch as they were all along one in the determination of finding happiness in something short of God, division upon earthly matters might well consist with a most cordial union, the agreement being perfect on the principle that this world is man's rest, and the disagreement being only as to which of its sections should be chosen for a home. But you will observe that, when vital christianity found its way into the breast of one member of this household, there must have passed a change, such as nothing else could have effected, on the position which he occupied relatively to the others. His acquiring a taste for religion, while the taste of his companions is exclusively for what is worldly, differs widely from his acquiring a taste for music, whilst the taste of his companions is exclusively for painting. The taste for painting is not rebuked, as it were, by the taste for music; they may be called sister tastes, and the votaries of the two may remain in close fellowship. But there is no congeniality, nay, there is the strongest antipathy, between a taste for the things of heaven and a taste for the things of earth. Hence the religious man, unavoidably, though it may be silently, reproaches the irreligious, with whom he is in habits of family intercourse. His deportment, exactly in the degree that it proves his affections set on things above, passes the severest censure on those whose affections are set on things below.

And if it be a consequence on the introduction of vital christianity, that one member of the domestic circle becomes practically, if not in words, the reprover of the rest, it must also follow that this one will incur the dislike of the rest, a dislike which will show itself in more or less offensive acts, according to the dispositions and circumstances of those who entertain it. Thus it is that christianity is turned into a sword. Admitted into the heart of an individual, it discovers itself in his life, and so makes that life a calm, but unflinching, rebuke of the unconverted, by its contrast with their own. But such rebuke must excite enmity in those who are its subjects. So that the household is necessarily divided; and to christianity must the division be ascribed. "A man is set at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." The converted member, being secretly disliked, will, under some shape or another, be persecuted by the unconverted; and thus the result is brought round, that the religion which Christ propagated, though in its own nature peace, becomes, through clashing with opposing principles, a sword to the family into which it gains entrance.

You will easily extend to a neighborhood, or nation, the reasoning thus applied to a family. Those who hold the doctrines of the Gospel in their purity, and whose conduct is regulated by its precepts, will unavoidably form a distinct party, to which Christ's words may be applied, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The principles on which the righteous act are so repugnant to those which the mass of men adopt, that to look for unanimity would be to expect the concord of darkness with light. So long as there is a native enmity in the heart to holiness and God—and this will remain until the nature be renewed—there lies a moral impossibility against the unbroken peace of a community, composed of the righteous and the unrighteous. They are men of different natures, of different worlds: the one party has been transferred to the king-

dom of Christ, the other remains in the kingdom of Satan. And since there must be war between these kingdoms, a war which shall only then terminate when evil is expelled from this creation, and the works of the devil are finally destroyed, peace can pervade no province of christendom, unless that province contain nothing but nominal, or nothing but vital christianity. Whilst there is nothing but nominal christianity, there is peace, the peace of death; whilst nothing but vital, there is peace, the peace of heaven. But whilst there is a mixture, there will be necessarily collision between the two; and, just according to the character of the times, will that collision produce the flames of a fierce persecution, or the heart-burnings of a silent, but rancorous hatred. Yes, christianity is the olive-branch; but it falls upon waters, which, struck by any thing pure and heavenly, boil instantly up as though stirred by a hurricane. Christianity is the dove; but it comes down to the forest where the ravenous birds and the unclean shelter, and the gentlest waving of its wing rouses the brood whose haunts seem invaded. Christianity, in short, is peace; but it is peace proposed to rebels with their weapons in their hands; and who knows not, that, if one of these rebels accept, whilst the others refuse, the proffered boon, those who adhere to their treason will turn upon him who takes the oath of allegiance, and treat him as basely recreant to the cause he has espoused? We require, therefore, nothing but the confession that man, in his natural state, is the enemy of God, and that, consequently, there must be direct contrariety between his principles and those of a religion which makes God the first object of love. This having been granted, you may take the case either of a nation or a family, of empires broken into parties and sects, or of households where the flow of social charities has been suddenly arrested; but sufficiency of producing cause has been assigned, to explain, without impeaching the tendencies of christianity, why our Lord's words have all along been verified, "I came not to send peace, but a sword."

We have thus examined our text under different points of view, and have

only, in conclusion, to remark how strictly our statements harmonize with prophecies which delineate the final spread of christianity. We have shown you that it is simply because but partially received, that christianity is practically a sword on the earth. Make the reception universal, and, in place of acting as a sword, christianity would bind into one all the households, and all the hearts of human kind. Thus the tendencies of the religion are to the producing, and, when produced, to the preserving that glorious state of things which is yet promised in Scripture, when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;" when "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." We can prove christianity fitted for the universal religion: we can prove also, that, if universally received, there would be universal peace and universal joy, the millennial day of a long-troubled creation. It may then even yet be a sword, but, oh, that every heart were pierced by it, and every family penetrated. Christianity may cause dissensions, and we lament them as proofs of the frailty and corruption of our nature; but we would not exchange the dissensions for the undisturbed quiet of spiritual lethargy. We know them to be tokens of life: where enmity is excited, godliness is making way. And, therefore, we will not say, in the words of the prophet, "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still." We will rather say with the Psalmist to Messiah, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously." We wish no scabbard for the sword but the hearts of the whole human population. Thus sheathed, the jubilee year begins: the one sword, like Aaron's rod, swallows up every other; and the universal wound is the universal health.

Let each of us remember, that, ere christianity can be to him peace, it must be to him a sword. The "broken and contrite heart" precedes the assurance that we are "accepted in the beloved." "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Where are there sharper, more cutting words than these, when



spoken by God's Spirit to the soul? "but in me is thine help found." What syllables can breathe more of hope, of comfort, of serenity? The sword christianity is that weapon which heals in wounding: there is balsam on its point, and, as it pierces, it cures. Teaching man to feel himself lost, what can more lacerate the spirit? Teaching man that whosoever will may be saved by a Mediator, what balm can be more medicinal? May God grant unto all of us, that, being first stricken with a sense of sin, we may be "justified by faith," and thus have "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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## SERMON VI.

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### THE DEATH OF MOSES.

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"And the Lord spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession; and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people."—Deuteronomy, 32: 48, 50.

The long wanderings of the Israelites were now about to be concluded. That wicked generation, which had provoked God by their murmuring and rebellion, had been exterminated according to the divine threat; and their children stood by the waters of Jordan, waiting the command to go over and expel the Canaanites. The land, flowing with milk and honey, was actually in view; the land which had been promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and in order to the possession of which by their descendants, Egypt had been desolated with plagues, and a mystic pillar of fire and cloud had traversed the wilderness. It was a moment of great excitement, and of great triumph: many must have looked impatiently on the river, which now alone divided them from their heritage, and have longed for the permission to pass this last barrier, and tread the soil which was to be henceforward their own. And who shall be more excited, who more eager for the crossing the Jordan, than the great leader of the people, he who had been commissioned to deliver them from bondage, and who had borne meekly with their insolence and ingratitude during forty years of danger and toil? It was the only earthly recompense which the captain of Israel could receive, that, having been instrumental in bringing the nation to the very border of their inheritance, he should behold them happily settled; and enjoy, in his old age, the beautiful spectacle of the twelve tribes dividing amongst themselves the fields and the vineyards for which their fathers had longed. Or, if this were too much, and he must resign to those younger than himself the leading Israel to battle with the possessors of the land, let him, at least, behold the rich valleys, the sunny hills, the sparkling brooks; and thus satisfy himself, by actual inspection, of the goodness of the heritage, the thought of which had cheered him in a thousand toils and perils.

But Moses, though there was to arise after him no prophet so honored and faithful; though he had been admitted to speak face to face with the Lord,

and had received marks of divine approbation granted neither before nor since to any of our race—Moses had sinned, and the incurred penalty had been, that he should not enter the land of promise. His earnest desire and prayer can do nothing towards procuring remission of the sentence: he may ascend Mount Nebo, and thence may he catch a distant view of the spreadings of Canaan: but he shall not cross the Jordan, he shall not plant his foot on the long-desired Palestine. Strange and apparently harsh decree! The sin itself had not seemed extraordinarily heinous; yet the threatened retribution is not to be escaped: lengthened and unvaried obedience can do nothing when set against the solitary offence; and the intercessor, who had so often pleaded successfully with God for the thousands of Israel, is denied the slight boon which he ventured to ask for himself. Look on the assembled congregation: who doubts that there are many in that vast gathering, who have done much to provoke the Almighty, who will carry into Canaan unsanctified hearts and ungrateful spirits? Yet shall they all go over the Jordan: they shall all follow the ark, weighty with sacramental treasures, as the waters divide before it, doing homage to the symbol of divinity. None shall be left behind but he who was first amongst the servants of God, who would have felt the purest joy, and offered the richest praise, on entering the land which had been promised to his ancestors. Aaron was already dead: this father of the Levitical priesthood had offended with Moses; and therefore was he denied the privilege of offering the first sacrifice in Canaan, and thus consecrating, as it were, the inheritance of the Lord. And now must Moses also be gathered to his fathers: he has been spared longer than Aaron, for he had been far more upright and obedient: he had been permitted to approach much nearer to the promised land, yea, actually to come within sight; but the Lord is not forgetful of his word; and now, therefore, comes this startling message, "Get thee up into this mountain, and die in the mount, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in Mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people."

The command was obeyed without a murmur. This man of God, whose "eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," ascended to the top of Pisgah; and there did the Lord, miraculously assisting his vision, show him "all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar." This having been done, he breathed out his soul into the hands of his Maker; and "the Lord buried him in a valley over against Bethpeor;" but no human eye saw this mysterious dissolution, and "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

Now we consider this as a very interesting and instructive portion of sacred history, presenting in large measure material for profitable discourse. We design, therefore, to engage you with its consideration; and if the truths which we shall have to bring before you, be only those with which frequent hearing has made you familiar, they will be found, we think, of such importance as to warrant their being often repeated. It will be necessary that we examine the sin of which Moses had been guilty, and which entailed his exclusion from Canaan. After this, we shall have to consider the peculiar circumstances of his death. There are thus two general divisions under which our subject will naturally resolve itself. In the first place, we are to consider why God refused to allow Moses to pass over Jordan: in the second place, we are to give our attention to the narrative of his ascending Mount Nebo, and there expiring in view of the land which he was not to enter.

Now you will remember that, soon after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, they were distressed for water in the wilderness, and were so incensed against Moses as to be almost ready to stone him. On this occasion Moses was directed by God to take the rod, with which he had wrought such great wonders in Egypt, and to smite the rock in Horeb; he did so, and forthwith came there out water in abundance. It is generally allowed that this rock in Horeb was typical of



Christ; and that the circumstance of the rock yielding no water, until smitten by the rod of Moses, represented the important truth, that the Mediator must receive the blows of the law before he could be the source of salvation to a parched and perishing world. It is to this that St. Paul refers, when he says of the Jews, "They did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." It appears that the waters, which gushed from the rock in Horeb, attended the Israelites during the chief part of their wanderings in the wilderness; and this it is which we are to understand, when the apostle affirms that the rock followed them—the rock itself did not follow them, but the stream which had issued from that rock—a beautiful representation of the fact, that, if Christ were once smitten, or once sacrificed, a life-giving current would accompany continually the church in the wilderness. We do not read again of any scarcity of water until thirty-seven years after, when the generation which had come out of Egypt had been destroyed for their unbelief, and their children were about to enter Canaan. It is probable that God then allowed the supply of water to fail, in order that the Israelites might be reminded that they were miraculously sustained, and taught, what they were always apt to forget, their dependence on the guardianship of the Almighty. Assuredly they needed the lesson; for no sooner did they find themselves in want of water, than they showed the same unbelief which their fathers had manifested, and, in place of meekly trusting in the God who had so long provided for their wants, "they gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron," and bitterly reviled them for having brought them out of Egypt.

Moses is bidden, as on the former occasion, to take his rod, that he may bring forth water from the rock. But you are to observe carefully the difference between the command now given him, and that which had been delivered in Horeb. In the latter instance, God had distinctly said to him, "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite

the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." But in the present instance the direction is, "Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water." In the one case, Moses was expressly commanded to smite the rock; in the other, he was as expressly commanded only to speak unto the rock. And we cannot but consider that there was something very significant in this. The rock, as we have supposed, typified Christ, who was to be once smitten by the rod of the law, but only once; seeing that "by one offering he had perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Having been once smitten, there is nothing needed, in any after death, but that this rock should be spoken to; prayer, if we may use the expression, will open the pierced side of the Lamb of God, and cause fresh flowings of that stream which is for the cleansing of the nations. Hence it would have been to violate the integrity and beauty of the type, that the rock should have been smitten again; it would have been to represent a necessity that Christ should be twice sacrificed, and thus to darken the whole Gospel scheme. Yet this it was which Moses did; and, in doing this, he greatly displeased God. We have shown you that the command to Moses and Aaron was most distinct, "Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes." But when we come to see how the command was obeyed, we read as follows: "And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock; and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice."

Can you fail, my brethren, to see that herein Moses sinned grievously? It is evident that he was chafed and irritated in spirit; his language shows this, "hear now, ye rebels!" rebels indeed the Israelites were; but it was manifestly in a burst of human passion, rather than of holy indignation, that Moses here used the term. And, then, observe how he proceeds—"Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" What are ye, O Moses and Aaron, that you should speak as though the virtue were in you, when you are

men of like passions and feebleness with ourselves? The Psalmist, when giving us the history of his nation during their sojourning in the wilderness, might well describe Moses as provoked, on this occasion, to hasty and intemperate speech. "They angered God also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes, because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."

But this was not the whole, and perhaps not the chief of his offence. In place of doing only as he had been bidden, and speaking to the rock, he lifted up his hand and smote the rock, yea, smote it twice. Was this merely in the irritation of the moment, or in actual unbelief? Did he only forget the command; or did he fear that a simple word would not suffice, seeing that, on the former occasion, the rock yielded no water until smitten by the rod? Probably there was a measure of distrust; he would hardly else have struck twice; and faith was not likely to be in vigorous exercise when an unholy wrath had possession of his mind. And thus the lawgiver displayed passion, and arrogance, and unbelief: passion, in that he addressed the multitude in the language of an irritated man; arrogance, in that he spake as though his own power were to bring forth the water; unbelief, in that he smote where he had been commanded only to speak. It seems probable that it was the unbelief which specially provoked God: for when he proceeded to the rebuking the sin, it was in these terms, "Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel."

To us, accustomed, as we unhappily are, to offend more grievously than Moses, even when the utmost had been said in aggravation of his sin, it may seem that God dealt harshly with his servant, in immediately pronouncing as his sentence, that he should not bring the congregation into the land which he would give them. It was a sentence of which Moses himself felt the severity; for he describes himself as pleading earnestly for a remission. But he pleaded in vain; nay, he seems to have been repulsed with indignation; for it is thus that he describes

the issue of his supplication: "But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter." Let it however be remembered, that the eyes of all Israel were now upon Moses and Aaron; and that, the more exalted their station, and the more eminent their piety, the more requisite was it that God should mark their offence; thus proving that he will not tolerate sin even in those whom he most loves and approves. It is not because a man stands high in the favor of his Maker, that he may expect to escape the temporal retributions of a fault; on the contrary, since he is not to sustain its eternal retributions, there is the greater reason why the temporal should not be remitted; for if they were, his sin would be wholly unvisited, and therefore apparently overlooked by God. And though indeed Moses had been singularly faithful and obedient, who can fail to perceive that the uncommonness of his fault would only have made his being unpunished more observable; whereas it gave, on the other hand, opportunity for a most impressive lesson, as to God's hatred of sin, and his resolve that it shall never go unrecompensed? The whole congregation had seen the sin committed; had they seen it also unnoticed by God, they might have argued that impatience and unbelief were excusable in certain persons, or under certain provocations. But when they found that Aaron was to die on Mount Hor, and Moses on Mount Nebo, because they had not believed God to sanctify him in their eyes, they were taught, even more impressively than by any thing which had happened to themselves or their fathers, that sin necessarily moves, under all circumstances, the wrath of the Almighty; that no amount, whether of previous or after righteousness, can compensate for the smallest transgression; and that eminence as a saint, rather insures than averts some penal visitation, if there be the least swerving from the strict line of duty.

And the lesson should lose none of its impressiveness because delivered ages back, and under a dispensation which had more of temporal sanctions than



our own. If I would judge the evil nature of unbelief, if I would estimate how the least distrust of his word provokes the Most High, I know not on what I can better fix my attention than on Moses, arrested on the very threshold of Canaan, because, on a solitary occasion, when moreover there was much to incense him, he had shown want of confidence in God, and overstepped the limits of a command. The thousands who fell in the wilderness "because of unbelief," warn me not so emphatically as this single individual, shut out from the promised land. They were bold and dissolute men: often and fiercely did they provoke God in the desert. But he was the very meekest on the earth: his face, it may be, still shone with celestial radiance, as when he descended from communing with God on the mount; and I do not know that there is another registered instance, during all the years which had elapsed since the coming out of Egypt, in which he had displayed the least approach to deficiency in faith. Does he not then furnish a most signal demonstration, that unbelief, in every degree and with every palliation, stores up against us matter of accusation; and that, if we will not simply take God at his word, act on his precepts, and leave him to make good his promises, we expose ourselves to his heavy indignation, and must look for nothing but the fulfilment of his threatenings? Let us be assured that God does not overlook, but rather accurately notes, with full intent to recompense, those doubtings and mistrustings which are often found in the best of his servants; and that, if he do not at the instant punish his people, when they follow not implicitly his bidding, it is not because he thinks little of the offence, but because he sees fit to defer the retribution. And if any one of you would plead that it is very hard to be simply obedient, that reason will come in with its suggestions, and that then it is intensely difficult to adhere strictly to revelation; if he would think it some excuse for the defects of his faith, that he is taken by surprise, or placed in trying circumstances, or is constitutionally anxious, or generally firm—we send him to behold Moses, eager to enter Canaan, and almost within its bor-

ders, and nevertheless commanded to ascend Mount Nebo to die; and we think that he will hardly venture to make light hereafter of the least distrust of God, when he finds that this eminent saint expired on the very margin of the promised inheritance, just because, in a moment of unbelief, he had smitten the rock to which he had been directed only to speak.

Such then was the offence of Moses: an offence which we are perhaps disposed to underrate, because prone ourselves to impatience and unbelief; and of which, as probably, we overrate the punishment, not considering that the chastisement was altogether temporal. It is true that God was angry with Moses, and that he showed his anger by disappointing one of his most cherished hopes: but the anger was exhausted in the one decree, that he must die upon Nebo; for this mountain was to be as the gate to paradise.

Let us now however examine the particulars which are narrated in our text of the departure of Moses. The sentence had been, that Moses should not bring the congregation into Canaan. Its literal execution did not forbid his approaching to the very confines of the land, nor his being allowed to look upon its provinces. And accordingly God, who always tempers judgment with mercy, though he would not remit the sentence, gave his servant as much indulgence as consisted with its terms, suffering him to advance to the very edge of the Jordan, and then directing him to a mountain whence he might gaze on large districts of the expected inheritance. Still the hour is come when Moses must die, however graciously it may be ordered, that, though he is to depart out of life because he had displeased God, his departure shall be soothed by tokens of favor. There is a strange mixture of severity and gentleness in the command, "Get thee up into this mountain, and behold the land of Canaan, and die in the mount whither thou goest up." There is severity—thou must die, though thou art yet in full strength, with every power, whether of mind or of body, unimpaired. But there is also gentleness—thou must die; but yet thou shalt not close thine eyes upon the world until they have been gladdened by a sight of the

valleys and mountains which Israel shall possess.

Yet it is neither the severity, nor the gentleness, which is most observable in the passage: it is the simple, easy manner in which the command is given. "Go up and die." Had God been bidding Moses to a banquet, or directing him to perform the most ordinary duty, he could not have spoken more familiarly, or with less indication of requiring what was painful or difficult.\* And in truth it was no hardship to Moses to die. He had deliberately "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt," and had long "had respect unto the recompense of the reward." And though he would fain have lived a while longer, to complete the work at which he had labored for years, he knew that to die would be to enter a land, of which Canaan, with all its brightness, was but a dim type. Therefore could God speak to him of dying, just as he would have spoken of taking rest in sleep: as though there could be nothing formidable in the act of dissolution, nothing from which human nature might shrink. Yet we could not have wondered, had Moses manifested reluctance; for it was in a mysterious, and almost fearful manner, that he was to depart out of life. It is, in all cases, a solemn thing to die; and our nature, when gathering itself up for the act of dissolution, seems to need all the prayers and kindnesses of friends, that it may be enabled to meet the last enemy with composure. The chamber in which a good man dies, is ordinarily occupied by affectionate relatives; they stand round his bed, to watch his every look, and catch his every word: they whisper him encouraging truths, and they speak cheerfully of the better land to which he is hastening, though they may often be obliged to turn away the face, lest he should be grieved by the tears which their own loss extorts. And all this detracts somewhat from the terror of dying. It is not, that, if the dying man were alone, God could not equally sustain him by the consolations of his grace. But it is, that there is something in the visible instrumentality, which is specially adapt-

ed to our nature: we are disposed to the leaning upon sensible aids, so that, whilst yet in the flesh, we can scarce commit ourselves to spiritual agency. Take away all the relatives and friends from the sick room, and is there not a scene of extraordinary desolateness, a scene from which every one of us recoils, and which presents to the mind such a picture of desertion, that the thought of its being our own lot would suffice to embitter the rest of our days?

Yet it was alone that Moses was to die: no friend was to accompany him to Pisgah; no relative was to be near when he breathed out his soul. "Get thee up into this mountain, and die there." Strange death-bed, which I am thus ordered to ascend! Mine eye is not dimmed, my strength is not broken—what fierce and sudden sickness will seize me on that mount? Am I to linger there in unalleviated pain? and then, when my soul at length struggles free, must my body be left, a dishonored thing, to be preyed on by the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air? Would you not have expected that thoughts such as these would have crowded and distressed the mind of the great lawgiver, on receiving the direction of our text? I cannot find words to express to you what I think of the mysteriousness and awfulness of the scene through which Moses had to pass. To separate himself from the people to whom he was tenderly attached; to ascend, without a single companion, the mountain from which he was never to return; to climb the lofty summit for the express purpose of there grappling with death, though he knew not with what terrors, nor under what shape; to go, in his unabated vigor, that, on a wild spot, alone with his Creator, he might be consumed by slow disease, or rapt away in a whirlwind, or stricken down by lightning—I feel as though it had been less trying, had he been summoned to a martyr's death, to ascend the scaffold in place of the mountain, and to brave the cries of bloodthirsty persecutors instead of the loneliness, the breathlessness, of the summit of Pisgah. And never does Moses wear to me such an air of moral sublimity, as when I contemplate him leaving the camp, for the express purpose of resigning his soul into the



hands of his Maker. Never does his faith seem to me so signal, so sorely tried, nor so finely triumphant. I gaze on him with awe, as, with the rod of God in his hand, he stands before Pharaoh, and appals the proud monarch by the prodigies which he works. And there is a fearful magnificence in his aspect, as, with outstretched arm, he plants himself on the Red Sea's shore, and bids its waters divide, that the thousands of Israel may march through on dry land. Yea, and who can look on him without emotions of wonder, and almost of dread, as he ascends Mount Sinai, whilst the fire and thunder of the Lord strike terror into the hearts of the congregation, that he may commune in secret with God, and receive from his lips enactments and statutes? But, on these and the like occasions, the very circumstances in which he was placed were calculated to animate the leader; and when we think on the mighty powers with which he was endowed, we can scarce feel surprise that he should have borne himself so heroically. The great trial of faith was not in the waving or striking with a rod which had often shown its mastery over nature: neither was it in the ascending a mountain, from which he expected to return with fit laws for the government of a turbulent multitude. It was the laying down of the miraculous rod which required vast faith; and the splendid courage was shown in the climbing a summit, where, with the rock for his couch, and the broad heaven for his roof, and far from all human companionship, he was to submit himself to the sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return."

And therefore, we again say, that, if we would survey Moses in his grandeur, when his moral majesty is most conspicuous, and the faith and boldness of a true servant of God commend themselves most to our imitation, then it is not when he breaks the chains of a long-enslaved people, and not when he conducts a swarming multitude through the wilderness, and not when he is admitted into intimate communings with the Almighty, that he should fix our attention—it is rather when he departs from the camp without a solitary attendant, and we know that, as

he climbs the steep ascent, perhaps pausing at times that he may look yet again on the people whom, notwithstanding their ingratitude, he tenderly loved, he is obeying the strange and thrilling command, "Get thee up into this mountain, and there die, and be gathered to thy people."

We cannot follow Moses in this his mysterious journey. We know not the particulars of what occurred on the summit of Pisgah; and where revelation is silent, it does not become us to offer conjectures. We are only informed that the Lord showed him great part of the land of Canaan, and then said unto him, "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." And here, just where curiosity is most strongly excited—for who does not long to know the exact mode in which Moses departed out of life, to be present at his last scene, and observe his dismissal?—the narrative is closed with the simple announcement, "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord." But we know, at least, that God was with his servant in this hour of strangeness and loneliness, and that, when Moses lay down to die, he had been abundantly cheered by visions vouchsafed him of the long-promised Canaan. And shall we think that Moses died contented and happy, just because his eye had rested on the waters of Jordan, and caught the wavings of the cedars of Lebanon? Was it merely by gazing on the natural landscape that the man of God was cheered; and was nothing done for him but the causing valleys that laughed with abundance, and heights that were crested with beauty, to gather themselves into one glorious panorama, as the inheritance which had been promised to the children of Abraham? We can scarcely think this. We may believe that the desire of Moses to enter into Canaan was a spiritual desire: with Canaan he associated a fuller revelation of the Christ: and he may have thought, that, admitted into the land, which in the fulness of time would be trodden by Messiah, he should learn more of that Redeemer of the world than he had been able to gather from existing prophecies and types.

In his own prayer to God, depreca-

ting the sentence which his impatience and unbelief had provoked, he spake as though there were one spot which he specially wished to be permitted to behold. "I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." "That goodly mountain"—were his thoughts on Mount Moriah, where Abraham had offered up Isaac, and which was to be the scene of a sacrifice of which this had been only a figure? Was it Zion on which he was eager to gaze, as knowing, that, on a far distant day, it would be hallowed by the footsteps, and witness the sorrows of the prophet, whose coming he had himself been commissioned to foretell? Indeed, we again say, we can hardly think that it was simply the wish of beholding the rich landscape of Canaan, its fountains and brooks, and olives and vines, which actuated Moses when imploring permission to pass over Jordan. He knew that in this land was to be accomplished the original promise; that there was the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. He knew that in this land would that Deliverer appear for whom patriarchs had longed, and of whom he was himself a signal type—the Deliverer in whom he felt that all his hopes centred, but whose office and person could be only feebly learned from revelations already vouchsafed. And why may it not have been, that Moses longed to tread Canaan, because his mind already peopled it with the august occurrences of coming ages? even as to ourselves would Palestine be a scene of surpassing interest, not because its mountains may be noble, and its valleys lovely; but because haunted by the memory of all that is precious to a christian, because every breeze would there seem to us to waft the words of Christ, and every flower to be nurtured with his blood, and every spot to be hallowed by his presence? To Moses it must have been through anticipated, whereas to us it would be through remembered events, that the land of Judea might thus preach by its every hill, and fountain, and tree. But the trains and processions of prophecy were as splendid, though not as distinct, as are now those of history; and if the lawgiver, privileged to search into the fu-

ture, and behold in mystic shadows the redemption of humankind, could not associate, as we ourselves can, various scenes with the various transactions in which sinners have interest, he might at least connect the whole land of Canaan with the promised rescue of our race, and regard all its spreadings as "holy ground," like that which surrounded the burning bush in Horeb. And as we ourselves, carrying with us the remembrance of all that was done "for us men and for our salvation," might feel that to visit Judea would be to strengthen our faith and warm our piety—seeing that dead indeed must be the heart which would not beat higher in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the mount of Calvary—so may Moses, borne onward by the prophetic impulse, have felt that it would be to awaken loftier emotions, and obtain clearer views, to enter and walk the land which was finally to be consecrated by the presence of the Shiloh.

For this it may have been that the lawgiver so intently longed to pass the Jordan. And when he stood on the summit of Pisgah, and God showed him the land, it may have been by the revelation of mysteries, which he had ardently desired to penetrate, that his spirit was cheered, and death stripped of all terror. He looked from the mountain-top o'er many a luxuriant scene; but as plain, and vineyard, and town, and river, were made to pass before his view, God, who is expressly declared to have been with him to instruct him, may have taught him how each spot would be associated with the great work of human deliverance. His eye is upon Bethlehem; but, lo, already a mystic star hangs over the solitary village; and he learns something of the force of the prediction which himself had recorded, "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel." The waters of a lake are heaving beneath him; but, lo, a human form is walking the agitated surface; and he is taught that as Noah, whose history he had related, was sheltered in the ark, so shall all, who will turn from iniquity, find safety in a Being whom no storms can overwhelm, and no waves ingulph. And now a mountain is seen, but not lit up, as the panorama had hitherto been, by



the joyous shinings of the sun; awful clouds hang around it and over it, as though it were the scene of some tragedy which nature shrank from beholding. This rivets the lawgiver's gaze; it is the "goodly mountain" which he had prayed that he might see. And there is a cross upon its summit; greater than Isaac is bound to the altar; the being, whom he had seen upon the waters, is expiring in agony. The transactions of the great day of atonement are thus explained; the mystery of the scape-goat is unfolded; and Moses, taught the meaning of types which himself had been directed to institute, is ready to exclaim, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Thus it may have been, that, ere Moses departed out of life, God not only showed him the promised land, but made it a kind of parable of redemption. And, on this supposition, we may well understand why Moses was so eager to see Canaan before he died, and why the sight should have been instrumental to the making him die happy. Yes, I cannot but feel, as I follow Moses in thought to the summit of Pisgah, that the man of God does not climb that eminence, merely that he may gladden his eye with a glorious developement of scenery, and satisfy himself, by actual inspection, of the goodness of the heritage which Israel was about to possess. And when I find that God himself was with this greatest of prophets, to assist his vision and inform him as to the territory which lay beneath his feet, I cannot think that the divine communication referred only to the names of cities, and the boundaries of tribes. Rather must I believe that what Moses sought, and God vouchsafed, was fuller knowledge of all that would be wrought in Canaan for the pardon of sin; that, as Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and Tabor, and Zion, graved themselves on the picture, it was their association with the promised Messiah which gave them interest in the eye of the delighted spectator; and that, therefore, it was literally to prepare Moses for death, by showing him "the Resurrection and the Life," that God spake unto him, saying, "Get thee up into this moun-

tain, and behold the land of Canaan, and die there, and be gathered unto thy fathers."

And there did Moses die; his spirit entered into the separate state, and no human friends were near to do the last honors to his remains. But God would not desert the body, any more than the soul of his servant; both were his by creation, and both were to become doubly his by redemption. It is therefore added to the strange narrative—and perhaps it is the strangest fact of all—that "he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Wonderful entombment! no mortal hands dug the grave, no mortal voices chanted the requiem; but angels, "ministering spirits," who are appointed to attend on the heirs of salvation, composed the limbs, and prepared the sepulchre. We refer to angels this performance of the last rites to the departed prophet, because it appears from another, though obscure, passage of Scripture, that angels were in some way the keepers of the body; for we read, in the General Epistle of Jude, of "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses." Why this special mystery and carefulness in regard of the body of Moses? It has been supposed, that prone as the Israelites were to idolatry, they might have been tempted, had they known the sepulchre of their great lawgiver, to make it the scene of superstitious observances. But this seems at least an insufficient supposition, more especially since the place of burial, though not the exact spot, was tolerably defined, "a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor;" quite defined enough for superstition, had there been any wish to give idolatrous honors to the remains of the dead.

But you will all remember that Moses, though he must die before entering Canaan, was to rise, and appear in that land, ages before the general resurrection. When Christ was transfigured on Mount Tabor, who were those shining forms that stood by him, and "spake of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem?" Who but Elias and Moses—Elias, who had been translated without seeing death, so that

he had entered, body and soul, into heaven; and Moses, who had indeed died, the soul having been separated from the body, but whose body had been committed to angelic guardianship, as though in order that it might be ready to take part in the brilliant transaction upon Tabor? The body, which had been left upon Pisgah, reappeared upon Tabor; and evidence was given, that those who lie for ages in the grave, shall be as glorious, at the second coming of Christ, as those who are to be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Moses was the representative of the myriads who shall rise from the grave; Elias, of those, who, found alive upon the earth, shall be transformed without seeing death; and forasmuch as the representatives appeared in equal splendor, so also, we believe, shall the quick and dead, when all that was typified by the transfiguration shall be accomplished in the preliminaries to the general judgment.

But we have no space to enlarge upon this. We must pass from the mysterious death and burial of Moses, and ask you whether you do not see that there are great spiritual lessons in the series of events which we have briefly reviewed! We need not tell you that the captivity of Israel in Egypt was a striking representation of the moral condition of the whole human race, as sold by sin into the service of a task-master. And when the chains of the people were broken, and God brought them forth "by a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm," the whole transaction was eminently typical of our own emancipation from bondage. But why might not Moses, who had commenced, be allowed to complete the great work of deliverance? Why, after bringing the people out of Egypt, might he not settle them in Canaan? Why, except that Moses was but the representative of the law, and that the law, of itself, can never lead us into heavenly places? The law is as "a schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ;" it may discipline us during our wanderings in the wilderness; but if, when we reach the Jordan, there were no Joshua, no Jesus—for the names are the same—to undertake to be our guide, we could never go over

and possess that good land which God hath prepared for his people. Therefore, we may believe, was it appointed that there should be a change of leaders, that all may know, that, if the law, acting through terrors, bring a man out of the slavery of sin, it is only the Gospel, rich in merciful provision, which can open for him an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Moses was commanded to resign the people to Joshua: "The very acts of God," says Bishop Hall, "were allegories; where the law ends, there the Savior begins; we may see the land of promise in the law; only Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament, can bring us into it."

Thus does Moses instruct us, by his death, to whom to look for admission into the heavenly Canaan. He instructs us moreover as to how we must be placed, if our last hours are to be those of hope and peace. We must die on the summit of Pisgah: we must die with our eye upon Bethlehem, upon Gethsemane, upon Calvary. It was not, as we have ventured to suppose, the gloriousness of the Canaanitish landscape which satisfied the dying leader, and nerved him for departure. It was rather his view of the Being by whom that landscape would be trodden, and who would sanctify its scenes by his tears and his blood. And, in like manner, when a christian comes to die, it is not so much by views of the majestic spreadings of the paradise of God, of the rollings of the crystal river, and of the sparklings of the golden streets, that he must look to be comforted: his eye, with that of Moses, must be upon the manger, the garden, and the cross; and thus, fixing his every hope on his Forerunner, he may be confident that an entrance shall be ministered unto him abundantly, into the kingdom "prepared from the foundation of the world." "Get thee up into this mountain, and die there." O that we may all be living in such a state of preparedness for death, that, when summoned to depart we may ascend the summit, whence faith looks forth on all that Jesus hath suffered and done, and, exclaiming, "we have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," lie down with Moses on Pisgah, to awake with Moses in paradise.



## SERMON VII.

## THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;" and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory! The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."—  
Psalm 24: 7, 8.

We hardly know how it has come to pass, that comparatively but little attention is given to the great fact of Christ's ascension into heaven. Christmas-day, Good-Friday, and Easter-day, are universally observed by members of our church; but Holy Thursday is scarcely known, even by name, to the great mass of christians. The church evidently designed to attach as much importance to that day as to the others, having appointed proper psalms as well as lessons, and furnished a sacramental preface. We have come, however, to the neglecting this ordinance of the church, so that, whilst we stately assemble to commemorate the birth, death, and resurrection of our Lord, we have no solemn gathering in celebration of his ascension. And if this have not arisen from men's attaching too little importance to the ascension, it is, at least, likely to lead to their thinking less of that event than it deserves, or than is required for it by the church. On this account, forasmuch as we have just passed Holy Thursday, we think it well to direct your attention to the closing scene of Christ's sojourn upon earth, so that, having stood round his cradle, followed him to Calvary, and seen him burst from the grave, we may complete the wondrous contemplation by gazing upon him as he soars from Mount Olivet. Of course it will not be the mere historical fact on which we shall enlarge: for we may assume that you require no evidence, that, as Jesus died and revived, so did he return in human nature to the heaven whence he had de-

scended, and take his seat at the right hand of God. But as, in discoursing on the resurrection of Christ, we strive to show you our personal interest in that event, arguing our own resurrection from that of our Head; so will we endeavor, in discoursing on the ascension, to consider the occurrence in its bearings on ourselves: for such bearings undoubtedly there are, seeing that St. Paul declares to the Ephesians, that God "hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

It is generally admitted, by expositors of the writings of David, that the words of our text have a secondary, if not a primary, reference to the return of the Mediator to heaven, when he had accomplished the work of human redemption. By many, the Psalm, of which our text is a part, is supposed to have been written and sung on occasion of the removal of the ark by David to Jerusalem; it may have been also employed when that ark was carried into the magnificent temple which Solomon had reared. The Levites may be regarded as approaching in solemn procession, bearing the sacred depository of sacramental treasures. As they approach the massive gates, they claim admission for the King of glory, who was perpetually to dwell between the cherubim that should overshadow the ark. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." The keepers of the gates are supposed to hear the summons, and they demand

from within, "Who is this King of glory?" The answer is, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle:" and then we are to imagine the ponderous gates thrown open, and the gorgeous throng of priests and Levites pressing towards the recesses of the sanctuary.

But if such were the transaction to which the Psalm originally referred, it may well be regarded as typical; whilst certain of the expressions, such as "ye everlasting doors," seem evidently to belong to no earthly house, however sumptuous and solid. In short, as Bishop Horsley affirms, the Jehovah of this psalm must be Christ; and the entrance of the Redeemer into the kingdom of his Father is the event prophetically announced. The passage is very sublime, when thus interpreted and applied.\* You are to consider the Mediator as ascending towards heaven, attended by a multitude of the celestial host. The surrounding angels mingle their voices in a chorus, which summons their glorious compeers, who are within the heavenly city, to open wide the gates, that the triumphant Savior may enter. The angels within the city may be regarded as thronging to its walls, wondering who this could be that approached in human form, and yet claimed admission into the immediate presence of God. They ask the name of the ascending man, for whom was demanded entrance to their own bright abode. The answer is a reference to his achievements upon earth, where he had "spoiled principalities and powers," and "made a show of them openly." "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." And then you are to suppose the everlasting doors to revolve, and that, amid the enraptured adorations of the whole celestial hierarchy, he who had been "a man of sorrows," and who "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," advances to the throne of God, and takes his seat there as "Head over all things to the Church."

It is in this manner that our text may be applied to the great event with which we now propose to engage your attention. And if angels, for whom Jesus did not die, and whose battle he

had not fought, may be considered as exultingly requiring his admission into the heavenly city, shall men be silent, men for whom he had suffered, men for whom he was about to intercede? Rather let us take on our own lips the summons to the gates and everlasting doors; and, as we stand with the Apostles, gazing upwards at the ascending Savior, let us exclaim, in a voice of gladness and triumph, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in."

What, you will say, are we to rejoice in the departure of our Lord from his Church? It may well be understood why angels should utter the words of our text. Angels were delighted at the return of that Divine Person, who had emptied himself of his glories, and withdrawn himself for a time, so far as Deity could be withdrawn, from the scene where he had been wont to show them his greatness. To angels, therefore, the ascension was indeed cause of lofty gratulation; we might well expect them to manifest their gladness, to throng joyously round the returning Redeemer, and to usher him, with every token of exultation, into the house of his Father. But assuredly the case is very different with us. The ascension of Christ was his withdrawal from all visible intercourse with his church; that church has ever since been in comparative widowhood; and the return of her Lord is the grand event with which she is taught to associate what will be most brilliant in her portion. Must we then be glad at the departure of Christ; and, as though we wished him to be hidden from our sight, must we summon the gates of the heavenly city, and bid them fly open that the King of glory may enter?

It is in the answer to such a question as this that we shall find matter of important and interesting discourse. There are indeed other aspects under which the ascension may be surveyed, and furnish to our contemplation truths of no ordinary kind. But the great thing for our consideration, is, the personal interest which we ourselves have in the ascension of Christ, the cause which that event furnishes for our gratitude and rejoicing. To this, therefore, we shall strictly confine ourselves; so

\* See Bishop Horne.



that the object of the remainder of our discourse is simple and definite: we have to search out, and set before you, reasons, from which it may appear that we are bound to exult in the ascension of our Lord; or which, in other words, might justify our joining in the summons, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors."

Now let us just suppose that Christ had not been exalted to the right hand of God, and let us see whether the supposition would not materially affect our spiritual condition. We know that Christ had taken our nature into union with the divine, on purpose that he might effect its reconciliation to God. In order to this, it was necessary that he should suffer and die; for the claims of justice on the sinful could not, so far as we know, have been otherwise satisfied. And he willingly submitted to the endurance: "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." But there was a virtue in this death, which made it expiatory of the sins of the world; so that when the Redeemer had breathed his soul into the hands of his Father, the offending nature was reconciled, and the human race placed within reach of forgiveness. Accordingly, it was justly to be expected that the resurrection would quickly follow the crucifixion of Christ; for justice could not detain our surety in the grave, when the claims, which he had taken on himself, were discharged. Hence the resurrection of Christ was both the proof and consequence of the completeness of his mediatorial work: he could not have risen had he not exhausted the penalty incurred by humankind; and, when he rose, God may be said to have proclaimed to the universe the sufficiency of the sacrifice, and his acceptance of it as an atonement for the sins of the world. If Christ had remained in the grave, and his flesh had seen corruption, we could only have regarded him as a man like one of ourselves; at least, we could never have regarded him as a substitute, whose vicarious endurances had been effectual on our behalf; for so long as he had been still "holden of death," we must have felt that he was a debtor to justice, and that, therefore, those whom he re-

presented could not have been freed.

But was it enough that the Mediator should be quickly released from the grave, and that our nature should be thereby pronounced capable of the forgiveness and favor of its Maker? It is here that we have to make our supposition, that the resurrection had not been followed by the ascension of Christ. It is sufficiently easy to certify ourselves of the indispensableness of the resurrection; for we see at once the force of the distinction drawn by St. Paul, that Christ was "delivered for our offences," but "raised again for our justification." But it is quite another thing to certify ourselves of the indispensableness of the ascension; for, when our justification had been completed, might not the risen Mediator have remained with the church, gladdening it perpetually by the light of his presence? To this we reply, that the reception of our nature, in the person of our surety, into heavenly places, was as necessary to our comfort and assurance as its deliverance from the power of the grave. We ask you only to remember, that, as originally created, man moved in the immediate presence of God; and that the state from which he fell was one of direct intercourse and blissful communion with his Maker. And Christ had undertaken to counteract the effects of apostacy; as the second Adam, he engaged to place human nature in the very position from which it had been withdrawn by the first. But was there any demonstration that such undertaking, such engagement, had been fully performed, until Christ ascended up to heaven, and entered, as a man, into the holy place? So long as he remained on earth, there was no evidence that he had won for our nature re-admission to the paradise from which it had been exiled. Whilst he "went about doing good," and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, that nature was still under the original curse, for the atoning sacrifice had not been presented. Whilst he hung on the cross, that curse was in the act of being exhausted; and when he came forth from the tomb, it was pronounced to be wholly removed. But the taking away the curse was not necessarily the restoring the nature to all the forfeited privileges

and blessings: it was the rendering the nature no longer obnoxious to God's righteous anger, rather than the reinstating it in God's love and favor. It is altogether imaginable that enough might have been done to shield the nature from punishment, and yet not enough to place it in happiness. And what we contend is, that, up to the moment of the ascension, no evidence was given on the latter point, though there was abundance on the former. The whole testimony of the resurrection was a testimony to the exhaustion of the curse; it went not beyond this; and therefore could not prove that the flaming sword of the cherub was sheathed, and that man might again enter the garden of the Lord.

And if Christ had never returned, in human nature, to his Father; if, having been delivered from the grave, he had remained upon earth, in however glorious a character, we must always have feared that our redemption was incomplete, and that we had not been restored to the forfeited position. For, whatsoever Christ did, he did as our representative; and whatsoever was awarded to him, was awarded to him as our representative. We are reckoned as having fulfilled in him the righteousness, and endured in him the penalties of the law: turn to Scripture, and you find that we were circumcised with Christ, that with him we were crucified, with him buried, with him raised up; for in him was our nature circumcised, crucified, buried, and raised; and what was done to the nature, was counted as done to the individuals to whom that nature might belong. Hence, in following Christ up to his resurrection, we follow our nature a long way towards full recovery from the consequences of apostacy; but, if we stop at the resurrection, we do not reach the reinstatement of that nature in all its lost honors. In order to this we must have that nature received into the paradise of God, and there made partaker of endless felicity. Christ, raised from the dead, and remaining always upon earth, would only have assured us of deliverance from the grave, and protracted residence on this globe: we must have Christ raised from the dead, and received up into glory, ere we can

have assurance that we shall spring from the dust and soar into God's presence.

Are we not then borne out in the assertion, that we have as great interest in the ascension of our Lord, as in any other of the events of his marvellous history; and that it would be almost as fatal to our hopes, to prove, that, having been raised, he had never been glorified, as to prove, that, having been slain, he had never been raised? In each case there would be a stopping short of the complete counteraction of the consequences of apostacy; in each case, that is, evidence would be wanting that the Redeemer accomplished what he undertook. We can go, therefore, with the disciples to the deserted sepulchre of Jesus, and rejoice in the proof that "his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." We triumph in the resurrection of our Lord; we see in it the resurrection of our nature; and we expect, with exultation, a moment when all that are in the grave shall hear a divine voice, and come forth indestructible. But we are not, we cannot be, content with this. Our thoughts are upon scenes which man traversed in his innocence, or rather upon scenes of which these were but types. We remember the garden where God condescended to associate familiarly with his creature; and we ask, whether the decree of exile have indeed been repealed, and whether the banished nature be free to re-enter the glorious abode? If so, that nature must ascend in the person of our representative; we are still chained to earth, if Christ, as our forerunner, have not passed into the heavens. What then? shall it be in sorrow, shall it be in fear, that we follow the Redeemer to Bethany, when about to depart from this earth; shall we wish to detain him amongst us, as though satisfied with the emancipation of our nature from the power of death, and not desiring its admission into all the splendors of immortality? Not so, angelic hosts, ye who are waiting to attend the Mediator, as he ascends to his Father. We know and feel that Christ must depart from us, if he have indeed secured our entrance to the bright land, where ye behold the universal King. And, therefore, we will join



your strain; we will echo your melody. Yes, though it be to ask that he may be withdrawn from his church, that he may no longer be amongst us to guide, and cheer, and control, we too will pour forth the summons, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in."

But this can perhaps hardly be said to put the necessity for Christ's exaltation in a sufficiently strong light. It certainly appears, from our foregoing reasoning, that, unless the resurrection had been followed by the ascension of our Lord, we should have wanted evidence of the restoration of our nature to the dignity and happiness which had been lost by transgression. But this evidence is furnished by the simple fact of the ascension: it does not seem to require the continued absence of Christ from his church. If we are to join the angels in the summons of our text, we must be supposed to feel and express joy that Christ was about to make his dwelling in heavenly places. Angels exulted, because the eternal Word was once more to manifest his presence in the midst of their abode, and to be again the light and glory of their city. But why should we share this exultation? We may allow it to be cause of rejoicing, that our nature was admitted, in the person of Christ, into the presence of God; but we seem to need nothing beyond this: if Christ had immediately returned to his church, we should have had the same assurance as now of our restoration to divine favor, and the advantages, in addition, of Christ's personal presence with his people.

Now we do not deny, that, in order to our joining heartily in the summons of our text, it is necessary that we should be prepared to rejoice in the exaltation, as well as in the ascension, of our Lord, in his remaining in heavenly places, as well as in his departure from earth. We must take into account the consequences of the ascension, as well as the ascension itself: for angels, undoubtedly, had regard to these, when manifesting gladness at the return of God's Son. And we are quite ready to carry our argument to the length thus supposed, and to contend that we have such interest in the exaltation of Christ,

in his being invested with glories which require his separation from the church, that men might well join with angels in summoning the gates of the celestial city to fly open for his admission. We would bring to your recollection, that God had covenanted to bestow great honor on his Son, in recompense of the work of our redemption. And though it be true that this honor was chiefly to be put on the humanity of the Savior, it may easily be shown that some portion of it appertained to the divinity. We are, of course, well aware that it was not possible for Christ, as God, to receive additions to his essential glory; and, accordingly, it is generally concluded that the glory conferred on him at his exaltation, was a glory which devolved exclusively on his manhood. It ought however to be borne in mind, that, though Christ was the eternal Son of God, equal to the Father in all properties and prerogatives of Deity, he had been but imperfectly manifested under the old dispensation, so that he received not the honors due to him as essentially divine. You can hardly say that the second and third Persons of the Trinity were so revealed, before the coming of Christ, as to be secure of the reverence, or worship, to which they have right as one with the first. We are now indeed able to find indications in the Old Testament of the doctrine of the Trinity: but this is mainly because of the light which is thrown on its pages from those of the New. If we had nothing but the Old Testament, if we were wholly without the assistance of a fuller revelation, we should be amply informed as to the unity of the Godhead, and thus be secured against polytheism: but probably we should have but faint apprehensions of a Trinity in the Godhead, and be unable to worship Father, Son, and Spirit, as the eternal, indivisible, Jehovah.

Accordingly, we have always agreed with those who would argue, that the plan of redemption was constructed with the design of revealing to the world the Trinity in the Godhead; so that, whilst the thing done should be the deliverance of our race, the manner of doing it might involve the manifestation of those Divine Persons, who had heretofore scarce had place in hu-

man theology.\* It was a fuller discovery of the nature of God, as well as the complete redemption of the nature of man, which was contemplated in the arrangements made known to us by the Gospel; the Son and the Spirit came forth from the obscurity in which they had been heretofore veiled, that they might show their essential Deity in the offices assumed, and establish a lasting claim to our love by the benefits conferred. And when Christ, in that prayer to his Father which occupies the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and which was offered but a short time before his crucifixion, entreated that he might be glorified with a glory which had originally been his, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," must he not have referred to a glory appertaining to his divine nature, rather than to his human? Whatever the glory that was about to descend on the manhood, it could not be described as a glory which he had had with the Father before the world was: his humanity was not then in being; and we know not how in any but a most forced sense, it could be said that Christ possessed, from all eternity, the glory which was to be given to the humanity not then produced. But if you consider our Lord as referring to his divinity, it is not difficult to understand his petition. From everlasting he had been the Son of God; and, therefore, there had belonged to him an immeasurable glory, a glory of which no creature could partake, inasmuch as it was derived from his being essentially divine. But, though essentially divine, he had not been manifested as divine; and hence the glory, which had appertained to him before the world was, had not yet become conspicuous: it was still, at least, partially concealed; for creatures had not yet been fully taught that they were to "honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." But now he was on the point of being exalted; and his prayer was, that "he might be glorified with the very glory which he had originally possessed; in other words, that he might be display-

ed to the world as actually divine, and thus might be openly, what he had all along been essentially, glorious with the glories of absolute Deity.

And you must all confess that it is a great point with us as christians, a point in comparison of which almost every other may be regarded as secondary, that the essential deity of Christ should be fully demonstrated, and that there should be nothing to encourage the opinion that he was but a creature, however loftily endowed. But suppose that Christ had remained with us upon earth; or suppose, that, having ascended, and thus proved the completeness of the redemption of our nature, he had returned to abide continually with his church. Would the covenanted recompense, so far as it consisted in the manifestation of his deity, have then been bestowed? Could Christ's equality with the Father have been shown convincingly to the world, whilst he still moved, in the form of a man, through scenes polluted by sin? To us it seems, that, under such a dispensation as the present, the continued residence of the Mediator upon earth would practically be regarded as contradicting his divinity. The question would perpetually be asked, whether this being could indeed be essentially divine, who was left, century after century, in a state of humiliation? for it must be humiliation for Deity to dwell in human form on this earth, so long at least as it is the home of wickedness and misery. And it would be nothing against this, that he was arrayed with surpassing majesty, and continually exhibited demonstrations of supremacy. The majesty, which moreover could only be seen by few at one time, would cease to dazzle when it had been often beheld; and the demonstrations of supremacy would lose their power after frequent repetition. We think that the common feelings of our nature warrant our being sure, that there would be immense difficulty in persuading a congregation, like the present, to kneel down and worship, as God, a being of whom they were told that he was dwelling as a man in Jerusalem, or some other city of the earth. And then you are to remember, that, even if his essential Deity had been manifested to men, he must probably have been with-

\* Waterland, Bishop Bull, &c.



drawn from other ranks of intelligence : for would it not almost imply a separation, which cannot take place, of his divinity from his humanity, to suppose him personally discovering his uncreated splendors in other parts of the universe, whilst he still dwelt in a body where he had suffered and died ?

So then we cannot well see how there could have been the thorough manifestation of the divinity of the Son, which had been almost hidden under earlier dispensations, had not Christ ascended up on high, and taken his seat at the right hand of the Father. We stay not to inquire how far the glory, which had been promised to his humanity, might have been bestowed, had there been nothing of this exaltation, or had it not been permanent. We confine ourselves to the glory which was to accrue to the divinity ; for all our hopes rest on the demonstration which God gave, that Christ was his Son, co-eternal and co-equal with himself. And if we were to ask evidence that he, who had been crucified and buried, was nevertheless a divine person, what should that evidence be ? We would not ask the mere resurrection of this person, though that must of course form the first part of our proof. We would not ask his mere ascension ; for if he might not tarry in the heavens, we should doubt whether they were indeed his rightful home. We would ask that he might be received into the dwelling-place of God, and there and thence wield all the authority of omnipotence. We would ask that angel and archangel, principality and power, might gather round his throne, as they were wont to do round that of the Father, and render to him, notwithstanding his human form, the homage which they render only to their Maker. We would ask that he should be withdrawn from mortal view, since Deity dwells "in light which no man can approach unto ;" but that, from his inaccessible and invisible throne, he should direct all the affairs of this earth, hearing the prayers, supplying the wants, and fighting the battles of his church, and thus giving as continued proofs of omnipresence as are to be found in the agencies of the material creation. And this is precisely the demonstration which has been furnished. On testimony, than

which even that of the senses could not be more convincing, we believe that the Lord our Redeemer, the very person who sorrowed and suffered upon earth, is invested with all the honors, and exercises all the powers, of absolute Deity ; and that, though he still retains his human form, there has been committed to him authority which no creature could wield, and there is given him a homage which no creature could receive. What though the heavens have received him out of our sight ? there have come messages from those heavens informing us of his solemn enthronement as "King of kings, and Lord of lords ;" and notes of the celestial minstrelsy are borne to mortal ears, celebrating the Son of the virgin as the great "I am," who was, and is, and is to come. And it is in consequence of such messages that thousands, and tens of thousands, of the inhabitants of this earth, bow at the name of Jesus ; and that vast advances have already been made towards a splendid consummation, when the sun, in his circuit round our globe, shall shine on none but the worshippers of "the Lamb that was slain."

Is this a result in which we rejoice ? Is it indeed cause of gladness to us, that the divinity of the Son, veiled not only during the days of his humiliation in flesh, but throughout the ages which preceded the incarnation, has been gloriously manifested, so that he is known and worshipped as God ? Then, if this be matter of rejoicing, we must be prepared to be glad, that, in ascending from Olivet, the Mediator ascends to fix his abode in the heavens. This full manifestation of divinity required heaven as its scene, and could not have been effected on the narrow and polluted stage of our earth. Yes, we must be glad that the ascending Savior is not to return, because by not returning he is to show forth his Godhead. And, therefore, we can again address the heavenly hosts, shining and beautiful beings, who are marshalling the way, in solemn pomp, for "the High Priest of our profession." We know why ye, O celestial troop, exult in his return. He ascends to be the light of your abode ; and ye triumph in the thought that he is to be eternally with you. And even we can share your ex-

ultation, we, from whom he departs, and who are no longer to be delighted by his presence. We feel that within the veil alone can his recompense be bestowed, a recompense which could not be withheld without the darkening of all our best hopes: let, then, our voices mingle with yours; for we too are ready to pour forth the summons, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in."

But we must carry our argument yet further. Let it be supposed that the promised recompense might have been fully conferred upon Christ, without his departure or absence—the recompense that was to belong to his divinity, as well as that of which his humanity was to be the subject—we may still show that his ascension and exaltation should furnish us with great matter of rejoicing. It is clearly stated in Scripture, that the descent of the Holy Ghost, as the guide and comforter of the church, could not take place whilst Christ remained on earth. We are probably not competent to the discovering the reasons for this; but if we consider the scheme of redemption as constructed that it might manifest the three persons of the Godhead, we may see a special fitness in the departure of the Son before the coming of the Spirit. You cannot imagine a more thorough manifestation of the second and third persons than has thus been effected. The offices, respectively sustained in the work of our redemption, bring these persons distinctly before us, and that, too, in the manner best adapted to gain for them our love and veneration. The Son, having humbled himself for us, and thus bound us to himself by the closest ties, returned to take his seat in the heavens, and to be the object of worship to all ranks of intelligent being. The scene was thus left ready for the entrance of the Spirit, who came down with every demonstration of almightiness, endowing the weak with superhuman powers, and instructing the illiterate in the mysteries of the Gospel. We will not presume to say that there could not have been this manifestation of the third person in the Trinity, had not the second ascended, and separated himself from the church. But, at least, we may urge that we have

a facility in distinguishing the persons, now that the office of one upon earth has succeeded to that of the other, which we could hardly have had if those offices had been contemporaneously discharged. Had the Son remained visibly with us, we should probably have confounded his office with that of the Spirit: at all events we should not so readily have recognized a Trinity of persons. Even as it is, the third person is often practically almost hidden from us by the second: what then would it have been, had not the heavens received Christ, that the Holy Ghost might be alone in his great work of renewing our nature?

But, whatever may be our thoughts and conjectures, it is evidently the representation of Scripture, that the Spirit could not have descended, had not Christ returned to his Father, and fixed his residence in heaven. St. John expressly speaks of the Holy Ghost as "not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." And our Lord himself, desiring to comfort his disciples, who were overwhelmed with grief at the prospect of his departure, made this strong statement, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Here, as you must all perceive, it is distinctly asserted that the Comforter could not come, unless Christ departed; whilst his coming is represented as of such moment to the church, that it would be advantageously procured even at the cost of that departure.

We are bound, therefore, in considering what reasons there may be to ourselves for rejoicing in the exaltation of Christ, to assume that this exaltation was indispensable to the descent of the Spirit on the day of pentecost, and to his presence with the church to expound and carry home the Gospel. And certainly, if we had no other reason to give why human voices should utter the summons of our text, this alone would suffice. Of what avail would it have been to us, that the Son had humbled himself, and wrestled, and died, on our behalf, had the Spirit not been given as a regenerating agent, to make effectual, in our own cases, what had been wrought out by Christ? Who



but this Spirit enabled apostles to combat the idolatries of the world, and gain a footing for christianity on the earth? Who but this Spirit guided the pens of sacred historians, that distant ages might possess the precious record of the sayings and doings of the Redeemer? Who but this Spirit now makes the Bible intelligible, throwing on its pages supernatural light, so that they burn and glow with the truths of eternity? Who but this Spirit convinces man of sin, produces in him that "godly sorrow" which "worketh repentance," and leads to the putting faith in the alone propitiation? Who but this Spirit gradually withdraws the affections from what is perishable, animates by setting before the view the prizes of heaven, and so sanctifies fallen beings that they become meet for the unfading inheritance? Who but this Spirit comforts the mourning, confirms the wavering, directs the doubting, sustains the dying? The office of the Son may indeed be more ostensible; it may more easily commend itself to our attention, because discharged in the form of a man; but he can know little of vital, practical christianity, who supposes it more important than that of the Spirit. What the Son did for us was valuable, because to be followed by what the Spirit does: take away the agency of the third Person, and we are scarce benefited by the agony of the second. And if then it were an act of mercy, not to be measured, that the Son of God descended to bear the punishment of our sins; it was no less an act involving all our happiness, that he departed to send down the Comforter. Shall we then join in the chorus of angels, when they throng the firmament in honor of the birth of the Redeemer, and shall we be silent when they celebrate his return to the presence of his Father? No; if we have any value for christianity as set up in the heart, and regulating the life, the departure of the Mediator will as much move our gladness as his coming. We are thankful that intrepid preachers were found, who, in the face of danger and death, carried the cross into every district of the earth. We are thankful that we were not left to the uncertainties and errors of oral tradition, but that we have a volume in our hands with the

broad signet of inspiration. We are thankful that men can repent, that they can be converted from the error of their ways, that they can "lay hold on the hope set before them," that they can "live soberly and righteously," die peacefully, and enter heaven triumphantly. But for all this we are practically as much indebted to the Spirit as to the Son. All this is virtually owing, not to the presence, but to the absence of the Mediator; and, therefore, will we hearken for the song of the cherubim and seraphim, as, with every indication of joy, they meet and encircle the ascending Head of the church; and even from earth shall be heard a summons, as though from the voices of those who are full of exultation, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in."

Now we would recur for a few moments, in winding up this great subject of discourse, to the first reason which we gave why men should rejoice in the ascension of Christ. We spoke of this ascension as the ascension of our nature, so that the entrance of Christ into heavenly places was the proof of our restoration to favor, and the pledge of our final admission into the paradise of God. And how noble, how elevating, is the thought, that it was indeed as our forerunner, as our representative, that Jesus passed into the presence of his Father. How glorious to take our stand, as it were, on the mount of Olives, to gaze on the Mediator, as he wings his flight towards regions into which shall enter nothing that defileth, and to feel that he is cleaving a way for us, the fallen and polluted, that we too may enter the celestial city. What were the words which angels addressed to the disciples, as they strained their vision to catch another glimpse of their departing Lord? "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Then the ascension should cause our minds to go forward, and fix themselves on the second advent of the Lord. Waste not your time, the angels seem to say, in regrets that your Master is taken from your view; rather

let faith anticipate a moment, when, "in like manner," with the clouds for his chariot, and flying "on the wings of the wind," he shall return to the earth from which he has just now departed. The gates shall again lift up their heads; the everlasting doors shall be opened; and the King of glory, who now enters to assume the sovereignty won by his sufferings and death, shall come forth in all the pomp, and with all the power, of the anointed Judge of humankind.

He shall come forth in the very character under which admission is claimed for him in the text, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." As yet there have been accomplished but a portion of the Old Testament types: the High Priest has offered the sacrifice, and carried the blood within the veil; but he has not yet returned to bless the gathered multitude. The cry however shall yet be heard at midnight; and "the Lord strong and mighty" shall approach, to confound every enemy, and complete the salvation of his church. And if we would be "found of him in peace" on this his return, we must see to it that we provide our lamps with oil in the days of our strength. I do not know a more awful part of Scripture than the parable of the ten virgins, to which, as you will perceive, we here make allusion. We are always fearful of dwelling too strongly on the minuter parts of a parable; but there is something so singular in the fact, that the foolish virgins went to seek oil so soon as they heard of the bridegroom's approach, but were nevertheless excluded, that we dare not pass it by as conveying no lesson. If the parable admit of being applied, as we suppose it must in a modified sense, to the circumstances of our death, does it not seem to say that a repentance, to which we are driven by the approach of dissolution, will not be accepted? The foolish virgins sought not for oil, till alarmed by tidings that the bridegroom was at hand; and many think that it will be enough if they give heed to religion when they shall have reason to apprehend that their last day is not distant. But the foolish virgins, although, as it would seem, they obtained oil, were indignantly shut out from the banquet;

what then is to become of sinners, who, in the day of sickness, compelled by the urgency of their case, and frightened by the nearness of their end, show something like sorrow, and profess something like faith?

I own that nothing makes me think so despondingly of those who wholly neglect God, till they feel themselves dying, as this rejection of the virgins, who would not begin to seek oil till they found the bridegroom at hand, and then obtained it in vain. It is as though God said, If you will not seek me in health, if you will not think of me till sickness tell you that you must soon enter my presence, I will surely reject you: when you knock at the door and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us," I will answer from within, "I never knew you: depart, depart from me." We dare not dwell upon this: we have a hundred other reasons for being suspicious of what is called death-bed repentance; but this seems to make that repentance—ay, though the death be that of consumption, and the patient linger for months, with his senses about him, and his time apparently given to the duties of religion—of no avail whatever: for if the man obstinately neglected God, till alarmed by the hectic spot on his cheek, that hectic spot was to him what the midnight cry was to the virgins, the signal that the bridegroom was near; and what warrant have we that God will admit him to the feast, if the five virgins were excluded with every mark of abhorrence, though they sought for oil, and bought it, and brought it?

We bring before you this very awful suggestion, that none of you may think it too soon to prepare to meet the Savior, whose ascension we have commemorated, and for whose return we are directed to look. Let all, the young and the old, be ever on the watch, with the loins girt, the lamps trimmed, and the lights burning. Let not that day overtake any of us "as a thief," as a thief not more because coming stealthily and unexpectedly, than because it will strip us of our confidence, and leave us defenceless. But if we now give diligence to "add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance;" if we labor to be "found of him in peace," appro-



priating to ourselves his promises, only as we find ourselves conformed to his precepts; then let "the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle," appear in the heavens: we shall be "caught up to meet him in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Glorious transformation! glorious translation! I seem already to behold the wondrous scene. The sea and the land have given up their dead: the quickened myriads have been judged according to their works. And now an innumerable company, out of all nations, and tribes, and tongues,

ascend with the Mediator towards the kingdom of his Father. Can it be that these, who were born children of wrath, who were long enemies to God, by wicked works, are to enter the bright scenes of paradise? Yes, he who leads them, has washed them in his blood; he who leads them, has sanctified them by his Spirit; and now you may hear his voice in the summons, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and these, my ransomed ones, shall come in, and behold, and share my glories."

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## SERMON VIII.

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### THE SPIRIT UPON THE WATERS.\*

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"And the earth was without form and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."—Genesis, 1: 2.

We are required on this day, by the ordinance of the church, to consider specially the person and work of the third person in the Trinity. The present festival is in commemoration of that great event, the pentecostal effusion of the Spirit, an event not inferior in importance to the incarnation of the Son. We say, not inferior in importance, for it would avail us little that redemption has been achieved by one Divine person, if it were not applied, or made effectual, by another. There is so much to fix, and even engross, our attention in the work of the Son; the humiliation, the sufferings, and the success, are so conspicuous and confounding, that we may easily become comparatively unmindful of what we owe to the Father and the Spirit; though the persons of the Trinity are not more one in essence and dignity,

than in their claim on our love, and their title to our veneration.

It is of great worth, therefore, that the church has instituted such commemorations as the present; for, by bringing before us in succession the mysteries of our faith, and the various blessings provided for our race, they do much towards preventing our dwelling on one doctrine or benefit, to the exclusion of others which deserve equal thought. There would have been the same stupendousness and virtue in the work of the Son, if it had never been followed by the descent of the Spirit. But then if it be true, that our hearts are naturally averse from God and holiness, so that, of ourselves, we are unable to repent, and lay hold on

\* The outline of this sermon has been partly derived from that of a discourse by Dr. Donne on the last clause of the verse.

the proffered, but conditional, deliverance, of what use is it that such costly provision has been made on our behalf, unless there be also provision for our being strengthened to make it our own? Thus such festivals as Christmas and Easter, and such commemorations as Good Friday, though they might remind us of sublime and awful things, would bring before us nothing that could be practically of worth to fallen creatures, if they were not to be followed by a Whitsunday, when might be celebrated the coming down of a divine agent to renew the corrupt nature. On this day, the third person of the Trinity descended to tabernacle upon earth, as on Christmas day the second was "found in fashion as a man." And not deeper, nor more abundant, should be our gratitude, that, "for us men and for our salvation," "the Word was made flesh," than that, "with the sound as of a rushing mighty wind," the Comforter came to take the things of Christ, and show them to the soul.

We have endeavored on former recurrences of the present solemnity, to explain to you the scriptural doctrine as to the person and work of the Holy Ghost. We have labored to show you, that the Spirit of God is not, as some have vainly taught, a mere quality, attribute, or property of God; but, in the strictest sense, a Divine person, possessing the divine nature, filling divine offices, and performing divine acts. And as to the work of this person, we have described it to be that of renovating and sanctifying our nature; so that, by secret suggestions and impulses, by exciting good desires, by strengthening our powers and rectifying our affections, by quickening our understandings to the perception of truth, and inclining our wills to obedience, he restores in us the lost image of God, and fits us for "the inheritance of the saints in light." Statements such as these, with regard to the personality and offices of the Holy Ghost, have been so frequently laid before you, that we can hardly consider their repetition necessary. We shall not, therefore, employ the present opportunity on proving what we may believe that you admit, or explaining what we may hope that you understand. But we will

go back to the earliest times, and see whether even then, ere this creation rose in its beauty, the Spirit of God was not mightily energetic, performing such wonders on inanimate matter as imaged the yet stranger which he was afterwards to perform upon mind.

It is not, however, that we design to lay great stress on arguments in support of the doctrine of the Trinity, which have been fetched from the very commencement of the Bible. We will only glance at those arguments. You are probably aware, that, in the first verse of the book of Genesis, where it is said, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," the Hebrew word, translated "God," is in the plural, whilst that rendered "created," is in the singular. From this it has been argued, with much appearance of truth, that Moses announces, in the very first line of his writings, a plurality of persons in the Godhead; for on what supposition are we to explain the combination of a plural noun with a singular verb, unless we allow that God may be spoken of in the plural, because there are several persons in the Godhead, and at the same time in the singular, because those persons constitute the one indivisible Jehovah? If we had nothing but this verbal criticism, on which to rest the doctrine of a plurality of persons in the Godhead, we might feel it insufficient for so weighty a superstructure. But we may fairly say, that, when we have proved the doctrine on less questionable evidence, there can be no reason for our rejecting this auxiliary testimony, a testimony peculiarly interesting from the place in which it occurs, seeing that the Bible thus commences with an intimation of the Trinity in unity.

And it is remarkable, that, having thus hinted at there being several persons in the Godhead, Moses immediately proceeded to speak of one of these persons, and to ascribe to Him a great office in the construction of this globe. If indeed this were the only passage in which we found mention of the Spirit of God, we should hardly be warranted in concluding from it the personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost. Had our text stood alone, it might perhaps with justice have been said, that nothing more was intended



by the Spirit of God, than an energy, or quality, appertaining to God. But when we have fortified ourselves from other Scriptures with abundant evidence that the Spirit is a person, and that too a Divine person, it is highly interesting to turn to the opening of the Bible, and there to find this agent introduced into the business of creation—the earliest historian combining with the latest evangelist to proclaim his title, and to ascribe to him operations which are beyond finite power. And if you further recollect, how, in various parts of the New Testament, the work of creation is distinctly attributed to Christ, as the eternal Son or Word of God; and then observe the same work ascribed, in the first page of Scripture, to the Spirit of God; you can hardly fail to allow that the great doctrine of the Trinity pervades the whole Bible: it is not indeed stated every where so distinctly that it cannot be overlooked; but it may easily be detected in passages whose witness to it might be doubtful, if we were not certified by others of its truth.

But it is very important, that, in our contests for fundamental articles of faith, we should not rest on weak or dubious arguments. An insufficient defence is a great injury to truth. Whilst, then, we believe, that there really are traces of the doctrine of the Trinity in the passages to which we have referred, and in similar which might be adduced, we should hold it unwise to lay much stress upon them in debate with the Unitarian. They are not our strong points; and we give him an advantage by insisting on our weaker. Thus, for example, we may be ourselves quite persuaded, that the recorded appearance of God to Abraham in the plain of Mamre, was a manifestation to that patriarch of the Trinity in unity. Three men appeared, and yet only the Lord is said to have appeared: and each of the three persons used language, or did things, which went to the proving him divine. Our church accordingly fixes as one of the lessons for Trinity Sunday, the chapter which contains the account of this appearance. Still, though we may be quite satisfied that there was thus given a symbolical notice of the doctrine of the Trinity, we would not attach weight to it in argu-

ing with the opponent of the doctrine: we feel that he might easily urge many specious objections, and that we should take dangerous ground by appealing to an occurrence, whose significative character is not asserted in Scripture.

But whilst we thus caution you against taking as sufficient arguments, what, after all, may be only doubtful intimations, we may yet affirm it both pleasing and profitable, to mark what may be called the first hints of truths, which were to be afterwards clearly revealed. There is all the difference between what will be likely to work conviction in an adversary, and what may minister to the confidence of a believer. And if the Unitarian will not go with me into patriarchal times, and trace on the yet young creation the vestiges of an incarnate Deity, it may tend greatly to the strengthening my own faith, and the heightening my own joy, that I can follow "the angel of the covenant," as he appears and disappears amongst the fathers of our race: and though I may not count it safe to rest the doctrine of the Trinity on the earliest inspired records, I may observe with delight that God spake in the plural number when he formed Adam of the dust, and be confirmed in my creed by hearing, that, whilst the earth was "without form and void," "the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters."

But we will now leave this more general discussion, and confine ourselves to the examination of the words of our text. We shall hereafter give you reasons for considering that these words admit of a two-fold application—to natural things and to spiritual. At present we assume this, and therefore announce the two following as our topics of discourse—the first, the moving of God's Spirit on the waters of the material creation; the second, his moving on waters, of which these may be regarded as in some degree typical.

Now there has been much anxiety felt in modern times by the supporters of revelation, on account of alleged discoveries in science, which apparently contradict the Mosaic record of the creation. We had been accustomed to conclude, with the Bible for our guide, that this globe was not quite six thou-

sand years old; that, six thousand years ago, the matter of which it is composed was not in existence, much less was it the home of animal or vegetable life. We had been accustomed to think, that, unless man had fallen, there would have been no decay and no death in this creation, so that every beast of the field would have walked in immortal strength, and every tree of the forest have waved in immortal verdure. But modern science is quite counter to these our suppositions and conclusions: for the researches of the geologist oblige us to assign millions, rather than thousands, of years as the age of this globe, and to allow it to have been tenanted by successive tribes of living things, long before the time when man was summoned into being.

It would in no sense be fitting that we should here examine the facts, or the reasonings, by which the geologist substantiates his position. But we are bound to declare our persuasion, that, to any candid mind, the facts and the reasonings, duly scrutinized and weighed, must appear quite conclusive; so that every student of the structure, every inquirer into the phenomena of the globe on which we dwell, must, we think, be almost forced to acknowledge that the earth bears on itself dates which prove well-nigh immeasurable antiquity, and contains the relics of animated tribes, whose existence can never be brought within the limits of human chronology. It is of no avail that we shut our eyes to the progress of science, and entrench ourselves within old interpretations of Scripture. We must go forward with the general advance of knowledge: for unless theology can at least keep pace with philosophy, it shall hardly be able to cope with infidelity.

And, for our own part, we have no fear that any discoveries of science will really militate against the disclosures of Scripture. We remember how, in darker days, ecclesiastics set themselves against philosophers, who were investigating the motions of the heavenly bodies, apprehensive that the new theories were at variance with the Bible, and therefore resolved to denounce them as heresies, and stop their spread by persecution. But truth triumphed; bigotry and ignorance could

not long prevail to the hiding from the world the harmonious walkings of stars and planets; and ever since, the philosophy which laid open the wonders of the universe, hath proved herself the handmaid of the revelation which divulged secrets far beyond her gaze. And thus, we are persuaded, shall it always be: science may scale new heights, and explore new depths; but she shall bring back nothing from her daring and successful excursions, which will not, when rightly understood, yield a fresh tribute of testimony to the Bible. Infidelity may watch her progress with eagerness, exulting in the thought that she is furnishing facts with which the christian system may be strongly assailed; but the champions of revelation may confidently attend her in every march, assured that she will find nothing which contradicts, if it do not actually confirm, the word which they know to be divine.

For though it may be true that we have no right to look in the Bible for instruction in natural things, it appears to us equally true, that we have right to expect that it will contain nothing that is false in reference to any subject whatsoever. It does not profess to treat of natural things; and, therefore, it would be unjust to open it with the expectation that natural things will be explained in its pages. But it does profess to be throughout an inspired document, and therefore to contain nothing but truth; and we think it, on this account, most just to expect, that, if it ever make a reference, however incidental, to natural things, the reference will be one which may be tested by all scientific discoveries, and proved in thorough consistence therewith. We count it most important that this distinction should be borne in mind; for whilst we hold that it would be no argument against revelation, if it were wholly silent on the structure of the earth, and the motions of the heavens—seeing that its object is to unfold to us yet deeper things—we equally hold that it would be an argument against it, if it ever spake of these matters in a way that would not bear being confronted with ascertained truths. It is thus with regard to the discoveries of the geologist. We should have had no right to require, as a necessary part



of a revelation from God, an account of the formation of our material system. The Bible might perhaps have been complete for all moral purposes, if there had been no such account on its pages. But if the inspired writer take upon himself to give an account of the formation of the earth and the heavens, we have full right to expect that his account will be thoroughly accurate; and we cannot but think, that if this account were absolutely irreconcilable with established conclusions of geology, some cause would be given for questioning whether Moses wrote under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

But there has not yet been, and we are sure there never will be, made out the impossibility of reconciling the discoveries of geology with the Mosaic account of the creation. We would adopt the statement which has been increasingly adopted and supported by our divines, that the two first verses of the book of Genesis have no immediate connection with those that follow. They describe the first creation of matter; but, so far as any thing to the contrary is stated, a million of ages may have elapsed between this first creation, and God's saying "Let there be light," and proceeding to mould matter into a dwelling-place for man. You cannot show that the third verse is necessarily consecutive on the two first, so that what is recorded in the one may not be separated, by a long interval, from what is recorded in the others. On the contrary, it is clear that the interval may be wholly indefinite, quite as long as geology can possibly ask for all those mighty transformations, those ponderous successions, of which it affirms that it can produce indubitable evidence. And we cannot but observe the extreme accuracy of the scriptural language. It seems to be nowhere said that in six days God created the heavens and the earth; but, as in the fourth commandment, that, "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth." Creation was the act of bringing out of nothing the matter of which all things were constructed; and this was done before the six days; afterwards, and during the six days, God made the heaven and the earth; he moulded, that is, and formed into dif-

ferent bodies, the matter which he had long ago created. And it is no objection to this, that God is said to have created man on the sixth day; for you afterwards read that "God formed man of the dust of the ground;" so that it was of pre-existent matter that Adam was composed. We seem, therefore, warranted in saying that with the third verse of the first chapter of Genesis commences the account of the production of the present order and system of things; and that to this Moses confines himself, describing the earth as made ready for man, without stopping to speak of its previous conditions. But since he does not associate the first creation of matter with this preparation of the globe for its rational inhabitants, he in no degree opposes the supposition, that the globe existed immeasurably before man; that it underwent a long series of revolutions, was tenanted by animals, and clothed with vegetation.

And though you may think it strange that there should have been death before there had been sin, you are to remember that there is nothing in the Bible to inform us that animals die because man was disobedient. We may have been accustomed to think so; but we do not see how it can be proved. And when you observe that whole tribes of animals are made to prey upon others, this species being manifestly designed for the food of that, you will perhaps find it hard to believe that every living thing was originally meant to live for ever; you will ask something better than a popular persuasion, ere you conclude that the insect of a day was intended to be immortal; or that what is the appointed sustenance of a stronger race, was also appointed to be actually indestructible.

These then are the general views which we think furnished by, or, at least, consistent with our text and the preceding verse. We take these verses as the only record which God hath been pleased to give of a mysterious, and probably immense, period, whose archives are found, by the scientific eye, sculptured on the rocks, or buried in the caves of the earth. They refer to ages, in comparison perhaps of which the human chronology is but a span, and of which, though we have received

no written history, we can read the transactions in the fuel which we heap on our fires, and in the bones which we dig from our hills. And there appears to us something surpassingly sublime in the thought, that our text may be thus the general description of an indefinite interval, from the creation of matter to the production of man. We do not know a grander contemplation than that to which the mind is summoned, when required to consider this globe as of an antiquity which almost baffles calculation, and as having been prepared, by changes which may have each occupied a series of ages, for the residence of beings created in the image of God. We know, of course, that, however far back we carry the origin of all things, there must have been a moment when God was literally alone in immensity; and that the longest, as well as the shortest, reach of time, must be as nothing in comparison of eternity. But, nevertheless, to minds constituted as our own, there is something inconceivably more commanding in the thought, that the earth has existed for ages which are not to be reckoned, and that, from time immemorial it has been a theatre for the display of divine power and benevolence, than in this, that it rose out of nothing six thousand years ago. In the one case, but not in the other, we assign to the agency of God an immeasurable period, a period throughout which there have been swarms of animated things, which only God could have produced, and only God could have sustained; and thus represent Deity as pouring forth the riches of his wisdom and goodness, and gathering in the tribute of mute homage from unnumbered tribes, when, perhaps, there were yet no seraphim to hymn his praises, and no cherubim to execute his will.

It is when surveyed under the point of view thus indicated, that our text appears most interesting and imposing. It is not, we suppose, the record of a solitary interference of creative might, but of a series of amazing revolutions, each of which was effected by the immediate agency of the Spirit of God. The earth passed from one state to another; islands, and continents, and waters assuming different forms and proportions, and being successively fitted

for different living tribes. And, on each transition, there may have been such an overthrow of the previous system, and such an approximation towards the original chaos, that the earth may have been "without form and void," and darkness may have rested upon "the face of the deep." But, in each case, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The word is rather, "brooded over the waters," as a hen, extending her wings, that vital warmth may be communicated, and the egg resolve itself into a living thing. The Spirit of God, whose especial office it is to impart life and vigor, so acted on the inert and insensible particles of the elemental mass, as to imprint on them those laws, and infuse into them those properties, which were to constitute what we are wont to call nature, under each successive dispensation. It was not that matter had any power or tendency, of itself, from its own inherent energies and qualities, to assume certain forms, and mingle in certain combinations. It was only that a vivifying Spirit busied itself with its innumerable atoms, communicating to each precisely what would fit it for its part or place in the new order of things; so that sea, and land, and air might swarm with the productions which God appointed to succeed to the extinct. And thus may revolution after revolution have been effected, not so much through the operation of second causes, as through the mysterious, but mighty, brooding of that celestial Agent, who still acts as the vivifier, and still extracts order and beauty from the moral chaos of humanity. One condition of the globe and its inhabitants may have succeeded to another, till, at length, the time approached when God had determined the production of a being who was to wear his likeness and act as his vicegerent. Then was the earth once more mantled with darkness: land and water were confounded: and the various tribes of animated nature perished in the elemental war. But a resistless agency was at work, permeating the shapeless and boiling mass, and preparing it for edicts to be issued on what we ordinarily call the six days of creation. The globe was henceforward to be the dwelling-place of rational, yea, immortal beings; it must there-



fore be impregnated with a fertility, and enamelled with a beauty, to which it had been heretofore a stranger; and nobler things must walk its fields, and haunt its waters, fit subjects of a ruler who was to bear his Maker's image. With the adapting matter to this loftier and more glorious state of things was the third person of the Trinity charged, the agent, as we suppose, in every former revolution. And when, at divine command, the earth brought forth the fresh green grass, and trees hung at once with varied fruit and foliage; and the waters teemed with the moving species that have life; and the dry land and the air were crowded with stately and beautiful creatures, waiting the appearance of their appointed lord,—Oh, it was not that there were natural processes which had gradually wrought out the chambers and furniture of a magnificent palace: it was rather, that whilst "the earth was without form and void," the Spirit of God had "moved upon the face of the waters."

But we have now to ask your attention to wholly different truths. We proposed, in the second place, to pass from natural to spiritual things, and to consider our text in a figurative sense. We were, however, to give you reasons that might justify the two-fold application of the passage. It may suffice to observe, that the work attributed to the Holy Spirit in the text, may serve as a type of that which this divine agent came down at Pentecost to perform. The Gospel of St. John commences in the same strain, and with the same sublime abruptness, as the book of Genesis: as though the historians of the New Testament and of the Old had to give the narratives of similar creations. And forasmuch as that moral change, which passes upon those who become heirs of the kingdom of heaven, is described in the Bible as nothing less than a new creation, and is moreover ascribed to the agency of that Spirit which brooded over the waters of the primitive chaos, there can, at least, be nothing unreasonable in the supposition that a typical character attaches, in some degree, to the scriptural account of the formation of all things.

You will find it, we believe, to have been the general opinion of the fathers

of the church, that the waters of which we read in the very beginning of the Bible, were a figure of those of baptism: so that, as the world may be said to have been produced from the waters on which the Spirit first moved, the church may be said to come forth from those sacramental waters, whose virtue is derived from that self-same Spirit's brooding. In accordance with such opinion, we believe it to be specially in and through the sacrament of baptism, that the Holy Ghost acts in renovating the nature, which became corrupt through apostasy. We deprecate, indeed, as much as any man, the so ascribing virtue to a sacrament, that those who have partaken of it may be led to feel sure that they need no other change, no greater moral amelioration, than has been thereby effected or procured. But, without doing this, we may attribute to baptism regenerating efficacy. We would ourselves be constantly using, and pressing upon others the use of the collect of our church for Christmas-day, in which the prayer is, "Grant that we, being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit," a prayer in which the supplicants undeniably represent themselves as already regenerate, and adopted into God's family; but in which, nevertheless, they ask for daily renewal, and that too through the workings of God's Spirit. The church here evidently distinguishes between regeneration and renewal, just as the apostle does, when he speaks of being saved by "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" regeneration, you observe, being closely associated with water—"the washing of regeneration"—and not confounded with that renovation which the Holy Spirit effects in true believers. If then the church say that regeneration takes place at baptism, she does not say that no renewal is needed besides this regeneration; why, therefore, should the church be taunted, as though she attached inordinate value to a sacrament, and taught men, that, because sprinkled in infancy, they stand in need of no further change?

That the church of England does hold, and does teach, baptismal regeneration, would never, we must ven-

ture to think, have been disputed, had not men been anxious to remain in her communion, and yet to make her formularies square with their own private notions. The words put into the mouth of the officiating minister, immediately after every baptism, "Seeing now, dearly beloved, that this child is regenerate," seem too distinct to be explained away, and too general for any of those limitations by which some would restrict them. You may tell me that the church speaks only in the judgment of charity, on the supposition that there has been genuine faith in those who have brought the infant to the font. But, even on this modified view, the church holds baptismal regeneration: she holds, that, if not invariably, yet under certain circumstances, infants are regenerate, only because baptized. We cannot, however, admit that the language is only the language of that charity which "hopeth all things." Had the church not designed to go further than this, she might have said, "Seeing that we may charitably believe," or, "Seeing that we may charitably hope that this child is regenerate:" she could never have ventured on the broad unqualified declaration, a declaration to be made whensoever the sacrament of baptism has been administered, "Seeing that this child is regenerate;" and then have gone on to require of the congregation to express their gratitude in such words as these, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit." We really think that no fair, no straightforward dealing can get rid of the conclusion, that the church holds what is called baptismal regeneration. You may dislike the doctrine: you may wish it expunged from the prayer-book; but so long as I subscribe to that prayer-book, and so long as I officiate according to the forms of that prayer-book, I do not see how I can be commonly honest, and yet deny that every baptized person is, on that account, regenerate.

But then, if you charge on the church, that because she holds this, she holds that every baptized person has so undergone, that he must retain, all the moral change necessary for admission into heaven, you overlook other parts

of the baptismal service which strongly rebut your accusation. No sooner has the church pronounced the infant regenerate, than she asks the prayers of the people, that "this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning"—evidently intimating her belief, that, though regenerate, the child may possibly not go on to that renewal of nature, which alone can secure godly living. And what are we to say of the appointment of sponsors, parties from whom the church requires vows in the name of the child, and to whom she commits the instruction of the child, if not that the church feels, that, whatever the benefits conferred by baptism, they remove not the necessity for the use of all those means, by which sinners may be brought nigh to God, and upheld in a state of acceptance? The church then holds that baptism regenerates: but the church does not hold that all who are thus regenerate, can never need any further moral change in order to fitness for heaven.

And we freely own that we know not how, consistently with Scripture, the church could do otherwise than maintain, that what is called the second birth is effected at baptism. Our Lord's words are very explicit, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." It can hardly be disputed that the being "born of water" refers to baptism—any other interpretation must be so strained, that to mention would be to refute it. But if we are "born of water" in baptism, do you mean to say that it is at some other time that we are "born of the Spirit?" Then there is a third birth, as well as a second; and of this I do not think we read in any part of Scripture. The water and the Spirit seem compared to two agents which meet in order to the production of a new creature. The birth spoken of is not from the water by itself, neither is it from the Spirit by itself: the simile would hardly have been drawn from a birth, had there not been agencies which might be said to combine, and which might therefore be likened to parents. Hence, if it be in baptism that we are "born of water," it must also be in baptism that we are "born of the



Spirit"—otherwise you make Christ speak of two births, where he manifestly speaks only of one; and you represent him moreover as using a simile which is scarcely in place, unless two agencies unite to effect a result.

We believe then, in accordance with the doctrine of our church, a doctrine of whose agreement with Scripture we are thoroughly persuaded, that every baptized person has entered, in virtue of his baptism, on a condition so different from his natural, become entitled to such privileges, and endowed with such grace, that he may be described as regenerate, or born again from above. He may fail to be finally advantaged by this adoption into God's visible family. He may not be trained up as a member of that family should be trained: there may be no attempt at making use of his privileges, none at acquiring or cherishing the dispositions which should characterize God's children, none at consolidating and perpetuating that membership which was derived to him by his initiation into the church. But this is only saying, that, having been made a child of God, he may fail at last to be an heir of the kingdom, through failing to conform himself to the known will, and to improve the offered mercies, of his Father in heaven. He may be reckoned with the sons, because he has been regenerated, and nevertheless be disinherited at the last, because he has never labored after, and therefore never acquired, that thorough moral renewal, of which his regeneration was at once the pledge and the commencement.

Let us pause for a moment, and endeavor to explain how it comes to pass that there is so little of visible efficacy in the sacrament of baptism. We would illustrate from the account of the restoration of the daughter of Jairus: Christ raised her from the dead by miracle; but immediately commanded that means should be used for sustaining the life thus supernaturally communicated. "And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway; and he commanded to give her meat." We can gather the history of the unconverted amongst you from this simple narrative. Whilst they were yet young, too young to feel or act for themselves, their parents were conscious that they

labored under great moral sickness, a sickness which was even unto death; and they went therefore to Jesus, and besought him to make them whole. And, by command of the great Physician, were the children sprinkled with the waters of baptism, and thus made members of his church, and heirs of his kingdom. Here was miracle: the child of wrath became a child of God: the guilt of original sin was removed; and a right acquired to all those gracious privileges, through which, diligently used, the life may be preserved which is imparted in baptism. We believe of these baptized children, that, had they died ere old enough to be morally accountable, they would have been admitted into heaven: and, therefore, do we also believe that they passed, at baptism, from death unto life, so that, in their case, baptism was instrumental to the recovery of the immortality forfeited in Adam. But when Christ had thus wrought a miracle, wrought it through the energies of the Spirit brooding on the waters, he issued the same command as to Jairus, and desired that meat should be given to those whom he had quickened. So long as the children were too young to take care of themselves, this command implied that their parents, or guardians, were to be diligent in instilling into their minds the principles of righteousness, instructing them as to the vows which had been made, and the privileges to which they had been admitted at baptism. So soon as the children had reached riper years, the command implied that they should use, with all earnestness, the appointed means of grace, and especially that they should feed, through the receiving another sacrament, on that body and blood which are the sustenance of a lost world. And we quite believe, that, whosoever the command is faithfully obeyed, the life, communicated in baptism, will be preserved as the infant advances to maturity. But unhappily, in far the majority of instances, the command is altogether disobeyed. The parents give the child no meat; and the child, when it can act for itself, attends to every thing rather than the sustenance of the spiritual life. Even religious parents are often to blame in this matter: for, not duly mindful of the virtues of baptism,

they address their children, as though they were heathens, in place of admonishing them, as members of Christ, to take heed how they let slip the grace they have received. And as to irreligious parents, who are not careful of their own souls, but live in neglect of those means through which is to be maintained the membership with Christ which baptism procures—what can we expect from them, but that they will suffer the principle of life to languish in their children, so that we shall have a multitude with no signs of moral animation, although they have been “born again of water and of the Spirit?” When, therefore, we are told, that, notwithstanding the use of the sacrament of baptism, the great mass of men have evidently undergone no renewal of nature; and when it is argued from this, that there cannot necessarily be any regeneration in baptism; our answer is simply, that God works by means as well as miracle; that means are to sustain what miracle implants; and that, therefore, the same appearance will be finally presented, if means be neglected, as if miracle were not wrought.

But, to recur to our text: if we have rightly expounded the church’s views with reference to baptism, we may well agree with the ancient fathers, who found the waters of baptism in those waters which covered the solid matter of this earth, and on which the Spirit of God moved, or brooded, with vivifying energy. You are not told, that by this moving or brooding on the waters, the Spirit actually produced this present globe, wrought it into the structure, and clothed it with the ornaments, which fitted it for the residence of man. All that seems to have been done, was the infusing such properties into matter, or the bringing it into such a condition, that it stood ready for the various processes of vegetation and life, but still waited the word of the Almighty ere the trees sprang forth and animated tribes moved rejoicingly on its surface. And what is this but a most accurate representation of what we suppose effected in baptism? We have not so described to you the virtues of this sacrament, as to lead you to believe that the child, on emerging from the waters, is so trans-

formed into the likeness of God as to be sure of a place in that city into which shall enter nothing that defileth. We have only maintained, that, by the operation of the Holy Spirit in and through baptism, the child is brought into such a relation to God, so purged from the guilt of original sin, so gathered within the covenant of forgiveness, so consigned to all the blessings of adoption, that it may be declared impregnated with the elements of spiritual life; elements which, if not willfully crushed, shall shoot into efflorescence and vigor beneath the creative word of the Gospel of Christ. Thus the parallel is perfect—there being only this difference, that inanimate matter, prepared by the Spirit, was sure to offer no resistance, but to resolve itself; at divine bidding, into the appointed forms; whereas the human soul, though similarly prepared, may withstand the quickening word, and refuse to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. But this is the only difference, a difference which necessarily follows on that between matter and mind. For as the rude and undigested chaos, unapt for vegetation, untraversed by life, became, beneath the broodings of the Spirit on the overspread waters, enabled for fertility, and pregnant with vitality, so that yet wilder and more unshapen thing, a fallen man, passing through these mystic waters on which the Holy Ghost moves, is made a fit subject for the renewing word of the Gospel, that word which clothes with moral beauty, and nerves with moral strength. He may resist the word which commands that the earth bring forth the green herb, and that land and water teem with proof that the voice of the Lord has been heard. Nevertheless, he has been put at baptism into such a condition, there has been communicated such an aptness for hearkening to the word, and obeying its injunctions, that the very globe, with its fields and forests, and varied tenantry, shall witness against him at the judgment, proving itself less senseless and obdurate, seeing that it arose from its baptism, ready, at God’s command, to be enamelled with verdure and crowned with animation. And, on the other hand, when we see an individual growing up “in the nurture and admonition of



the Lord," steadily acting out the vows, claiming the privileges, and exhibiting the benefits of baptism; so that life is, from the first, a progress towards spiritual perfection; we think it not strange if he cannot tell us the day of his conversion, if he can only describe an acquaintance with God, and a love to his name, which have been deepening as long as he can recollect; we should indeed marvel that a fallen creature could thus seem set apart, from his very infancy, to holiness, as though he had been born a child of God and not of wrath, if we did not remember, that, whilst the earth was yet "without form and void," waters had suffused it, and that on the face of those waters had moved the Spirit of God.

These then are the two great senses in which, as we think, our text should be understood; the one literal, the other allegorical. In ordinary cases we object to the giving a typical meaning to an historical statement, unless on the express warrant of other parts of Scripture. But though in this case we have no such warrant, yet, forasmuch as the work of the Holy Spirit upon man is described as the extracting a new creation from the ruins of the old—the very work attributed to this agent in our text—we can hardly think that we deal fancifully with Scripture, if, in imitation of early writers, we suppose a designed parallel between the natural and spiritual operations. And though we will not say that what we have, in conclusion, to advance, may be equally defended by just laws of interpretation, it is perhaps only such an application of the text as may be pardoned for the sake of its practical worth.

On the waters of the chaos brooded the Spirit, in order that from the undigested mass might spring a noble world. On the waters of baptism still broods that same Spirit, in order that from the midst of a fallen race may rise the church of the living God. But there are other waters, of which Scripture speaks; and it is most comforting to remember that on these too may God's Spirit rest. There are the waters of affliction, waters to which reference is made in the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;" and to which the Psalmist

alludes when he speaks of the deep waters as having come in, even unto his soul. And when these waters are poured upon the christian, how often may it be said that the earth is "without form and void," and that darkness is "upon the face of the deep." All seems a blank: on every side there is gloom. But is not God's Spirit upon the waters? Surely, if it be true that the believer in Christ comes forth purified by affliction, stronger in the graces of the Gospel, and more disposed to the yielding those fruits which are to the glory of God, it is also true that the Spirit, who is emphatically styled the Comforter, has moved upon the waters, exerting through them a mysterious influence on the disordered faculties; so that there hath at length emerged, as from the surges of the early deep, a fairer creation, with more of the impress of Deity and the earnest of heaven. And if sorrows may be likened unto waters, certainly death may, which cometh in as a deluge, and overwhelms the generations of men. This is a flood beneath which the earth becomes literally "without form and void." The body, fashioned out of the dust, is reduced to its elements: all that was comely, and strong, and excellent, departs; and a darkness, fearfully oppressive, is on "the face of the deep." But the Spirit of the living God is moving on the flood. These our bodies, like the globe from which they have been taken, and into which they must be resolved, are to pass from an inferior to a nobler condition; they are to be broken into a chaos, only that they may be reconstructed in finer symmetry, and with loftier powers. And when I find it declared that "he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you"—the resurrection being thus attributed to the Spirit—I feel indeed that it may again be said, that the Spirit of God moves "on the face of the waters;" it moves as the guardian and vivifier of every particle submerged in the dark flood of death; and its agency shall be attested, attested as magnificently as by new heavens and a new earth springing from the wreck of the old, when this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible incorruption.

We cannot detain you longer, though fresh illustrations crowd upon the mind. Living waters, we read, are to go out from Jerusalem, "till at length the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "The Spirit of God will be on these waters; the flood of evangelical truth would avail nothing unless accompanied by this agent; but forasmuch as the Gospel shall be preached "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," the desert will blossom, the waste places rejoice, and the globe be transformed into one glorious sanctuary. There is a river, moreover, in the heavenly city, "clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and

of the Lamb." The waters flow from the throne of two persons of the Trinity; then on these waters must be the Third Person, who proceedeth from the other two. Yea, even in heaven may this Spirit act on that which hath been earthly, fitting us to pass from one stage to another of glory and blessedness, so that futurity, like antiquity, shall be full of splendid changes, each being a progress towards Deity, though Deity will ever remain unapproachable. God grant—this is all we can say in conclusion—that none of us may "quench the Spirit;" Oh, though he can sit majestical on the flood of death, he may be actually quenched by the flood of unbelief.

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## SERMON IX.

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### THE PROPORTION OF GRACE TO TRIAL.

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"And as thy days, so shall thy strength be."—Deuteronomy, 33 : 25.

It is of great importance, that, in considering the present condition of our race, we neither exaggerate, nor extenuate, the consequences of the original apostacy. We believe it possible to do the one as well as the other; for though it may not be easy to overstate the degree of our alienation from God, or our inability to return unto him from whom we have revolted, we may speak as though certain passions and affections had been engendered in us since the fall, having had nothing correspondent in man as first formed. And this, we believe, would be a great mistake; for we do not see how any part of our mental constitution can have been added, or produced, since we turned aside from God: we may have prostituted this or that affection, and perverted this or that power; but assuredly the affection and the power, under a better aspect and with a holier aim, must have belonged to our nature before as well as since the transgression of Adam. We are not to think that an entirely new set of energies and passions was communicated to man, when he had fallen from innocence; for this would be to represent God as interfering to implant in us sinful propensities. When a man is converted, and therefore regains, in a degree, the lost image of his Maker, there are not given him powers and affections which he possessed not before; all that is effected is the removal of an evil bias, or the proposing of a new object; the faculties are what they were, except that they are no longer warped, and no longer wasted on perishable things. And if that renewal of human nature,



which is designated as actually a fresh creation, consist rather in its purification and elevation, than in its endowment with new qualities, we may conclude, that, in its fall, there was the debasement rather than the destruction of its properties, the corruption of what it had rather than the acquisition of what it had not.

It is, we think, a very interesting thing to observe men's present dispositions and tendencies, and to consider what they would have been had man continued in uprightness. The distorted feature, and the degraded power, should not merely be mourned over and reproached: they should be used as elements from which we may determine what our race was, ere it rebelled against God. When, for example, we behold men eagerly bent on the amassing of wealth, giving all their energy and time to the accumulation of riches which they can never need and never enjoy, we consider that we are not looking merely on a melancholy spectacle, that of creatures squandering their lives on what deserves not their strivings. There is indeed the exhibition of misused powers; but the exhibition is, at the same time, a striking evidence of what man originally was, and for what he was designed. The passion for accumulation, for making provision for the unknown future, is among the strongest indications that the soul feels herself immortal, and urges to the laying up for yet distant times. What would the man, who is laboring night and day for corruptible possessions, have been, had he remained what he was as originally created? He would have been an eager candidate for those treasures which are enduring; and all that concentration of powers on a perishable good, which now excites our sorrow, would have been the undivided employment of every energy on the acquisition of everlasting blessedness. It is not a new desire, a desire which subsisted not under any form in the unfallen man, that which now actuates the great mass of our race, who toil and strive only to be rich. It is the very desire which, we may believe, was uppermost in our first father, when the image of God was in its freshness, and evil had not entered paradise. The desire has

been turned towards the base and corruptible; there has been a change, a fatal change in its object; but, nevertheless, the desire itself belonged to our nature in its glorious estate, God its author, and immortality its aim. So that, from the spectacle of crowded marts and busy exchanges, where numbers manifestly devote themselves, body and soul, to the amassing of money, we can pass in thought to the spectacle of a world inhabited only by unfallen men, creatures who, like Adam as originally formed, present the lineaments of the Lord God himself. The one spectacle suggests the other: I learn what man was, from observing what he is.

And it is not merely that, viewing the matter generally, we can see that the passion for accumulating wealth is an original affection of our nature, implanted for noble ends. If you examine with a little more attention, you will be struck with the testimony which there is in this passion to the exigencies and destinies of man. If you were to speak with a great capitalist, one who has already realized large wealth, but who is as industrious in adding to his stores as though he were just beginning life, he would perhaps hardly tell you that he had any very definite purpose in heaping up riches, that there was any great end which he hoped to attain, or any new source of happiness which he expected to possess. He goes on accumulating, because there is an unsatisfied longing, a craving which has not been appeased, a consciousness, which will not suffer him to be idle, that man's business upon earth is to make provision for the future. For our part, we have no share in the feeling of wonder, which we often hear expressed, that worldly men, as they grow old, are even more eager than ever in adding to their riches. The surprising thing to us is, when a man who for years has been intent on accumulating capital, can withdraw from his accustomed pursuits, and yet not be industrious in seeking treasure above. We think it only natural, that the covetous man should be more covetous, as he draws nearer to death; for we regard covetousness as nothing less than the prosituted desire of immortality: it is the

passion of a being, goaded by an irrepressible feeling that he shall have wants hereafter, for which it behoves him to be provident now; and what marvel, if this feeling become more and more intense, as the time of dissolution approaches, and the soul has mysterious and painful forebodings of being cast, without a shred, and without a hope, on eternity?

But we make these remarks on the passion for accumulation as found in unconverted men, because we wish to examine whether there be any thing analogous in those who have been brought to the providing for an after state of being. The worldly man, as we have seen, is not content with a present sufficiency, or even abundance: he is always aiming at having a large stock in hand, so that he may be secure, as he thinks, against future contingencies. And when you view him as a creature with misdirected energies, we have shown you that his irrepressible tendency to the providing for hereafter, is among the most beautiful of testimonies to his being immortal, and placed upon earth to prepare for another state. But if we now suppose him so transformed by divine grace, that he is enabled to set his affections "on things above," there is a strong likelihood that he will carry with him, if we may so express it, the habit of accumulation, so that he will be in spiritual things, what he has long been in temporal, discontented with the present supply, and desirous of anticipating the future. And, of course, we are not required to limit this remark to the case of an individual who has been eager in amassing earthly wealth. We think it a feature which is characteristic, without exception, of all men, that there is a tendency to the providing for the future. There is hardly the mind to be found, so stripped of every vestige of its origin, that it cares only for to-day, and has no regard for to-morrow. And if there be an universal disposition to the having, if possible, the supply of future wants already in possession, we may well expect, on the principles already laid down, that such disposition will show itself in regard of spiritual necessities, and not be confined to such only as are temporal.

It is the consideration of the dispo-

sition, as it may thus operate in righteous individuals, with which we now desire to engage your attention. Our text may have often recurred to you as a beautiful promise, pledging God to administer such supports to his people as shall be proportioned to their several necessities. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And it is unquestionably a most encouraging declaration, full of godly comfort, admirably fitted to sustain us in the prospect of various trials, and abundantly made good in the experience of the righteous. But whilst we admit that it is as a promise that our text is most interesting and attractive, we consider it so constructed as to convey important lessons, with regard to that desire to make provision on which we have been speaking. You will observe that the promise is simply, that strength shall be proportioned to the day: there is no promise of an overplus, nor of such store in hand as shall make us confident for the future, because we have already full provision for its wants. The promise is literally fulfilled, if, up to the instant of our being placed in certain circumstances, we are without the grace which those circumstances may demand, provided only that the grace be imparted so soon as the circumstances become actually our own. Nay, we must go even further than this. The text clearly implies that we are not to expect the grace or assistance beforehand: it would not be true, that the strength was as the day, if we were furnished, before the day of trial came, with whatsoever would be needful for passing well through its troubles. All that we have right to infer from the passage, is, that God will deal out to us the supply of our wants as fast as those wants actually arise; but that he will not give us any thing which we may lay by, or hoard up for fresh emergencies. And thus, as we may say, the text is strongly condemnatory of all bringing into religion of that passion for accumulation which is so distinctive of human nature; for it requires us to live, from moment to moment, upon God, and forbids our expecting that the grace for to-morrow will be communicated to-day.

These however are points which require to be stated more at length, and



with greater clearness. In order therefore to combine the several lessons which seem furnished by the expressive words of our text, we shall direct your attention to two chief topics of discourse—considering, in the first place, the caution, and in the second, the comfort, which the righteous may draw from the saying, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Now there is a wise, and there is also an unwise, comparison of himself with others, which may be instituted by a righteous individual. He may so compare himself as to be animated to imitation, or he may so compare himself as to be disheartened by a sense of inferiority. And in the latter comparison, whose result proves that it ought not to have been made, there is commonly no due regard to a difference in circumstances. If, for example, we take into our hands the annals of martyrs, and read the story of the undaunted heroism with which confessors, in days of fierce persecution, have braved the loss of all that is valuable, and the endurance of all that is tremendous, we can perhaps hardly repress a painful feeling of inferiority; and we close the book with a tacit but reproachful confession, that we seem void of the faith which could perform the like wonders. And we have no wish to say that there may not be great cause, when we ponder what the saints of other days have suffered and done, for acknowledging that we come far short of their zeal for the truth, and their love of the Savior. It is more than possible that christianity in the present day is feebler in power, and fainter in lustre, than in earlier times, when it was to be professed with danger, and maintained with blood. But what we now contend for, is, that we have no right to consider the piety of our own times inferior to that of former, just because we may doubt whether the christians of this generation have the courage and fortitude of martyrs of old. It is exceedingly probable that there are very few christians, who can declare, after honestly and fearlessly examining themselves, that they feel so nerved to bear all things for Christ, that they could go joyfully to the stake, and sing his praises in the midst of the flames. Let men read the history of a

Ridley, or a Hooper; and then let them inquire, if we were now placed in like circumstances, could we display the like constancy? and perhaps from the one end of this christian land to another, you would scarce find any to answer in the affirmative. And this, we wish you carefully to observe, would not arise from mere humility, from any actual underrating of their strength and devotedness. The answer would be the answer of perfect truth, the answer dictated by a most accurate comparison of the supposed trial with the possessed power. We are quite prepared for any the most cogent proof, that christians of the present day are not actually in possession of the courage and determination of martyrs and confessors; and that if, on a sudden, without their receiving fresh communications of grace, they were brought before rulers, and required to maintain their profession with their lives, the likelihood is that there would be grievous apostacy, even where we have no reason now to doubt the sincerity.

But we do not consider this as proving any thing against the genuineness or worth of the existing christianity. We consider it no evidence that religion has deteriorated, that the christians of our own day stand not ready for the stake which their forefathers braved. The stake and the scaffold are not the appointments of the times: it is not God's will that the believers of this generation should be exposed to the same trials as martyrs and confessors. And we reckon it a great principle in the dealings of God with his church, a principle clearly laid down in the words of our text, that the grace imparted is rigidly proportioned to the emergence; so that, as it is never less, it is never more, than suffices for the appointed tribulation. There was bestowed upon martyrs the strength needful for the undergoing martyrdom, because it was martyrdom which God summoned them to encounter. That strength is not bestowed upon us, because it is not martyrdom which God hath called us to face. In both cases the same principle is acted on, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And this principle would be utterly forgotten and violated, if we, who live in

times when the fires of persecution no longer blaze, felt ourselves thoroughly furnished for the dying nobly for the truth. But then we can be confident that the principle would be equally preserved, if there were to pass a great change on the times, and the profession of christianity once more exposed men to peril of death. We have no fellowship with that feeling which we often hear expressed, that so degenerate is modern christianity, that, if there were a return of persecution, there would be no revival of the fine heroism which former days displayed. We believe indeed that there is a vast deal of nominal christianity, of mere outward profession, with which the heart has no concern. This will necessarily be the case under the present dispensation, whenever christianity is the national religion, adopted by a country as the only true faith. And it is hardly to be questioned that a great part of this nominal christianity would altogether disappear if the supposed change were brought about. What men have not received into their hearts, they cannot be expected to defend with their lives. But we speak now of vital christianity, of that christianity which is allowed to be genuine, but presumed to be weak. It is of this christianity that the melancholy suspicion is entertained, that it would not stand an onset of persecution, but would prove itself a recreant if summoned to the trials of confessors of old. And it is this suspicion which we consider wholly unwarranted, and in the entertainment of which we have no share whatsoever. We regard the suspicion as involving an utter forgetfulness of the principle announced in our text, and as proceeding on the supposition that God might be expected to allow such an accumulation of grace as would cause us to have in hand full provision for the future. But with the words which we are considering kept steadily in mind, we could look forward to a return of persecution, with a confident expectation of a return of the spirit of the martyrs. Be it so, that the best christians of the day seem unprepared for the surrender of property, the submission to captivity, or the sacrifice of life. They nevertheless have in them the same faith, the same in nature, if not in degree, as

was possessed by those noble ones of old, who "witnessed a good confession," and whose names shed undying lustre on the annals of our religion.

And, having the same faith, we can be sure that they would be strengthened for the meeting all such trials as God, in his providence, might be pleased to appoint. It is not that zeal is extinguished, that love has departed, that courage has perished. It is not that our valleys and cities are indeed haunted by the memory of such as counted all things "loss for Christ," but could not again send forth defenders of the truth. On many a mountain-side would the servants of the living God again congregate, if the fiends of persecution were once more let loose. Scenes, consecrated by the remembrance of what was done in them of old, would be again hallowed by the constancy of the veteran and the stripling, and by the fine exhibition of torture despised, and death defied, that the doctrines of the Gospel might be upheld in their purity. We should again have the merchant, willing to be stripped of his every possession, and turned a beggar on the world, rather than abjure one tittle of the faith. We should again have the tender and the weak, the woman and the child, who now shrink from the least pain, and are daunted by the least danger, confronting the fierce and the powerful, and refusing to deny Christ, though to save themselves from agony. We should again have the dungeons filled with unflinching men, proof equally against threat and persuasion; and who, counting religion the dearest thing of all, would neither be bribed from it by an empire, nor seared from it by death. And we venture on this prophecy, not from any confidence in the natural resources of those who seem unprepared to do and dare nobly for the truth. It is not that we think they have undeveloped power, which would be brought out by exposure to trial. It is only that we are persuaded that God accurately proportions the strength to the circumstances, communicating his grace as the difficulties increase. And men may look back, with a sort of despondency, to times when righteousness was undaunted by all the menaces of wickedness. They may draw a reproachful



contrast between the christianity which was cheerful in a prison and confident on a scaffold, and that of modern days, which seems little like it in boldness and disinterestedness. But we see nothing in the contrast but evidence that the supplies of grace are proportioned to the need, and ground of assurance that christianity now would be what christianity was, were God to take off his restraints from the enemies of his church. Yes, when we hear it said that days of persecution may again be permitted, that again may professing the name of Christ cause exposure to all from which human nature shrinks, we are far enough from having before us the gloomy spectacle of universal apostacy. The imagery which the statement brings to our mind is that of unblenching fortitude and high daring and christian heroism: there is the cruelty of savage and bloodthirsty men, but there is also the constancy of meek and single-hearted believers: there are the emissaries of an inquisition hunting down the righteous, but there are the righteous themselves holding fast their profession: the dead seem to live again, the ancient worthies have their faithful representatives, the mantle of "the noble army of martyrs" is resting on a host of every age and every rank—and all because God hath announced this as his principle in his dealing with his people, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Now we have learned, from our intercourse with christians when in sickness, or under affliction, that it is practically of great importance to insist on the truth that no greater measure of grace should be expected than is sufficient for present duties and trials. The passion for accumulation, to which we have so often referred, is to be traced in men who are busy for the next world, as well as in those who are busy only for this. As he who is gathering perishable wealth is not content with the supply of present wants, but always looks anxiously to future, so the christian, though possessing what is needed by his actual condition, will be thinking of what would be necessary if that condition were worse. And we are certain, that, both in temporal and spiritual things, it is the object of God to keep us momentarily dependent on himself.

We allow that, in temporal things, men seem able to defeat this intention, and to acquire something that might pass for independence. But this is only in appearance: it were the worst infidelity which should contend for the reality. The man of ample property may say with the rich fool in the parable, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" but you must all be conscious that no amount of wealth can secure its possessor against want, if God saw fit to strip him of his riches. It is only in appearance that the man of large capital is better provided for to-morrow, than the beggar who knows not whither to turn for a morsel of bread: you have simply to admit that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," and you admit that the opulent individual and the destitute are alike dependent upon God, that by to-morrow they may have virtually changed places, the opulent being in beggary, and the destitute in abundance.

But in spiritual things, the distribution of which God keeps more visibly, though not more actually, in his own hands, there is not even the appearance of our having the power to be independent. We can have only such measure of grace as God is pleased to bestow; and it may be withdrawn or continued, increased or diminished, entirely at his pleasure who "holdeth our souls in life." But nevertheless there may be a craving for a larger measure of grace than suffices for present duties, just as there may be for a larger measure of wealth than suffices for present wants. And if there may be this craving, there may be also a dissatisfied and uncomfortable feeling, if the larger measure of grace should not seem bestowed. Whereas, if we may use a very homely expression, it is not God's method to allow us a stock of grace, to be kept in reserve for occasions which may arise. The petition in the Lord's prayer seems applicable to spiritual as well as to temporal food, "Give us day by day our daily bread." What we are taught to ask is what we may hope to receive; and we are not to ask to-day for the bread for to-morrow: we are to be content with to-day's supply, and to wait till to-morrow before we speak of its wants. Nei-

ther may we think that it was without a great spiritual meaning that Christ delivered the maxim, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and grounded on it a direction to his disciples, that they should "take no thought for the morrow." We do not suppose that he forbade prudence and forethought, but only undue anxiety, with respect to the future and its necessities. There are passages enough in Scripture from which to show, that it is not the part of a christian to make no provision for after days, as though his wants were to be supplied without his using means. But we believe that there are respects in which we ought to act literally on the saying, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." We believe that sufficient unto the day are its trials and burdens; and that, if a man find himself enabled to bear these, he has no right to complain at not feeling able to bear heavier. Sufficient unto the day are its trials, because the strength bestowed is accurately proportioned to those trials; and therefore we ought not to harass ourselves by imagining our trials increased, and then mournfully inferring that we should sink beneath their weight. And yet this is a very common form of the disquietude of christians. A parochial minister constantly meets with this case in his pastoral visitations. Men are fond of supposing themselves placed in such or such circumstances; and because they do not feel as though their faith and fortitude were equal to the circumstances, they draw unfavorable conclusions as to their spiritual state. It is thus, for example, that they fetch material of uneasiness from the registered actions and endurances of saints: they do not feel as if they could brave martyrdom; and therefore are they confounded by the history of martyrs, though it ought to encourage them, as proving that God will not suffer men to be tempted "above that they are able."

And the same occurs very frequently in reference to death. There are many christians who are harassed by a great dread of death, a dread of the mere act of dying; and who may be said to go heavily half their days, through fear of the taking down of their "earthly house of this taberna-

cle." And we have no wish, at any time, to represent death as other than an enemy, nor its assault as other than necessarily terrible to our nature. It is vain to try to make death desirable in itself: it is a remnant of the original curse; a remnant for whose final removal there has been made abundant provision, but which, whilst yet unrepealed, must press grievously even on the best of mankind. In what way, then, would we strive to encourage those christians who are distressed with apprehensions of death? Simply by telling them that they do wrong in thinking of the future, and that it is both their duty and interest to confine themselves to the present. Are they enabled to bear the trials of to-day, the trials whether of sickness or sorrow? Enough: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" still "wait upon the Lord;" and if to-morrow bring heavier trials, to-morrow will bring greater strength. But we feel unprepared for death, we shrink from the thought of death. Be it so; to die is not your present business, to live is your present business. And it is strictly to your present business that God proportions your present grace. You are wishing to have already in your possession the strength for dying; but this is virtually to wish that God would allow you to accumulate, and thus to be provided beforehand with all that may be needed for trials to come. And God loves you too well to give you even this image or shadow of independence. He knows it essential to your spiritual well-being that you should hang upon him from moment to moment; he knows also that this you could hardly do, if grace were so supplied that you had more in hand than sufficed for to-day. Be thankful that you have now strength enough for what you are called to do and endure; be confident that you shall have strength enough for all that you may hereafter be called to do and endure. The one is a pledge of the other; that experience verifies our text now, should persuade you that experience will verify it in time yet to come.

We wish that we could prevail upon you all thus to submit to the present, without being troubled as to the future. We are sure that a great part of the



anxiety of christians is anxiety as to trials and duties which are not allotted them, but which possibly may be. They imagine, as we before said, circumstances, and are disquieted because those circumstances seem to overmatch their strength. The mother will gaze on her favorite child; and, in the midst of her gladness, a shade of melancholy will pass across her brow, at the thought that this child may be taken from her by death. Her feeling is, I could not bear to lose him; it would go far to break my heart; were God to appoint me that trial, it would be too much for my patience and resignation. But what has the mother to do with thus imagining her child as snatched away from her embrace, whilst he is before her in all the buoyancy of health? It may be that she does not now feel as though she could submit with meekness to his loss. But his loss is not what she is now called to endure; and she does wrong in examining her faith by its ability to bear what is only possible, and not actual. In like manner, a man feels, and is distressed by the feeling, that he could not now meet death with composure and assurance. What of that? has he reason to believe himself on his death-bed? if not, he has no right to expect the death-bed strength, and therefore none to be disturbed at its wants. And, oh, it is very beautiful to observe how those who have suffered their present peace to be ruffled by anticipated trials, have found their fears groundless, and have gone bravely through the trouble from the thought of which they shrank. The blow has come upon the mother, and that sweet child has sickened and died. But the trial has not exceeded the mother's strength: she has found herself so sustained that she has even been able to "rejoice in tribulation;" and she has laid in the grave, almost without a tear, and certainly without a murmur, the little one whom she had pillowed delightfully on her breast. And the hour of departure has been at hand to that christian who has been harassed by a fear of dissolution; but where have been the anticipated terrors? Has he been the timid, stricken, shuddering thing which he had pictured himself when looking forward to the last scene? On the contrary he

has met the dreaded enemy with perfect tranquillity; with the dying patriarch he has "gathered up his feet into the bed," and has meekly exclaimed, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." And what are we to say to these registered instances, instances whose frequency might be attested by every minister of the Gospel? What but that there is a continual acting on the principle of our text, that it is not God's method to provide us beforehand for a trial, but that it is his method to do enough for his people when the trial has come? Yes, if we can indeed prove that the burden which, at a distance, threatened to crush us, has not been too heavy; that the waters which seemed likely to overwhelm us have not been too deep—if there be abundant demonstration that what men have felt unequal to when it was not their portion, they have endured excellently when it has fallen to their lot; sorrows, whose name scared them, not having exhausted their patience, and pains, at whose mention they quivered, having been borne with a smile, and even death itself, whose image had long appalled them, having laid aside its terrors when actually at hand—will it not be confessed that God wondrously makes good the declaration, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be?"

And this appeal to experience might be made by most christians, even if they had no history but their own from which to gather proof. If it were not that we receive blessings and deliverances, and then forget them, or fail to treasure them up as choice proofs of divine favor, it could not be that many amongst us, after years and years of professed fellowship with God, would be as much dismayed by the prospect of new trials, or as much disheartened by the pressure of new burdens, as though they had known nothing of the supports and consolations which the Almighty can afford. If there were any thing like a diligent remembrance of our mercies, a counting up of the instances in which God has been better to us than our fears, in which he has interposed when we were perplexed, sustained us when we were falling, comforted us when we were sorrowful, it would be hard to say how there could be place for anxiety, whatever

the clouds which might be gathering round our path. Let mercies be remembered as well as enjoyed, and they must be as lights in our dark days, and as shields in our perilous. If I find a believer in Christ cast down, because exposed to some vehement temptation, or placed in circumstances which demand more than common spiritual firmness, I would tell this man that he has no right to look thus gloomily on the future; he is bound to look also on the past; can he remember no former temptations from which he came out a conqueror, no seasons of danger when God showed himself "a very present help?" and what then has he to do but to "gird up the loins of his mind?" despair may be for those, if such can be found, for whom nothing has been done: but a man whose history is virtually a history of deliverances, should regard that history as equally a prophecy of deliverances, a prophecy from God, God who alone can predict and is sure to fulfil, that the strength shall be as the day. And wherefore, moreover, is it, son or daughter of sorrow, that a discipline of suffering has not strengthened thee in faith? We might think that thou hadst never been in the furnace of affliction, to see how thou dost shrink from entering it again. And yet there are those of you who, like the three Jewish youths, have come forth unharmed, seeing that one "like unto the Son of God" has been with them in the midst of the flames. Take again the case of a mother: if she have lost a child, and yet been enabled to exclaim when that child was carried forth to burial, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord," what right has she to be dismayed if another child seem sickening, as though about to follow its brother or its sister? Why should the mother recoil from the new trial, as if she felt that it would certainly be more than she could bear? Let her go to the grave of her dead child, that she may learn patience in tending the couch of the living. Did not God comfort her in her former affliction? Did he not speak soothingly to her when maternal anguish was strong? What then has she to do with despondency? The form of her buried child might well

rise before her, and look at her with a look never worn in life, a look of upbraiding and reproach, if she fail to remember, as the hectic spot appears on another young cheek, how the Lord hath said, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The widow again, from whom God hath removed the chief earthly prop and guardian; but who was mercifully strengthened, when her husband's eyes closed in death, to look calmly on her boys and girls, and to bid them not weep, for that a Mighty One had declared himself "the husband of the widow and the father of the fatherless," what cause has she to be afterwards dismayed, when difficulties thicken, and the providing for her family seems beyond her power and even her hope? Let her travel back in thoughts to the first moments of her widowhood, let her remember the gracious things that were whispered to her spirit, when human comforters could avail nothing against the might of her sorrow; and will not her own experience rise as a witness against her, if she gather not confidence from what is treasured in memory, if she exclaim not to the God who bound up the wounded heart, thou wilt again make good thine own word, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be?"

It is in this way that we would have you live over again times and scenes of extraordinary mercy, that you may be nerved for extraordinary trial. We often hear it recommended that christians should study the histories of eminent saints, in order that, through observing the deliverances wrought for others, they may be encouraged to expect deliverances for themselves. And the recommendation is good. There is no more profitable reading than that of the lives of men distinguished by their piety. It is likely to suggest to us our own inferiority, to animate us to greater diligence in running the christian race, and, by proving to us how God's promises have been fulfilled, to lead us to a firmer reliance on his word. And accordingly we have great pleasure, if, in visiting the pious cottager, we find that in addition to the Bible, which is emphatically the poor man's library, he has on his shelf some pieces of christian biography, the histories of certain of those devot-



ed servants of God who were "burning and shining" lights in their generation, and who bequeathed their memory as a rich legacy to posterity. But there is a book which we are yet more anxious that the pious cottager should study, a book which he may possess and peruse, though he have not a single printed volume in his dwelling, nor scholarship enough to read it, even if he had. And this is the book of his own experience. This is the book on whose pages are inscribed what the Almighty God hath done for himself. There is not the converted man who has not such a book. The title-page may be said to have been written on the day of conversion; and there is scarce a day afterward which does not add a leaf. And a page out of this book is practically worth whole printed volumes. It may not be stamped with so surprising a history as those volumes could furnish: but then it is the history of the reader himself, and therefore has a reality and a convincingness which scarce any other can have. The student of the volume of memory knows thoroughly well that there is nothing exaggerated, nothing fictitious, in any of its statements: so that there is such an air of truth thrown over the biography, as can hardly adorn the narrative of a stranger, which is almost sure to seem romantic in proportion as it is wonderful. And besides this, you can scarcely put yourself into the position of the stranger: you imagine a thousand circumstances of difference which forbid your identifying your case with his, and inferring what God will do for you from what he has done for him. Hence there is more of encouragement in the least blessing bestowed on ourselves, than in the greatest on a stranger. On every account, therefore, we may safely say that a whole library of biographical works, and those, too, relating exclusively to righteous individuals, could not so minister to the assurance of a believer as the documents which his own memory can furnish. These then should often engage his study, whether he be the rich or the poor. We would have you give unto your mercies an imperishable character. We would have you engrave them, not upon the marble, and not upon the brass,

but upon the tablets of your own minds; and we would have you watch the sculpture, that not a solitary letter be obliterated. If Samuel, when the Israelites had won a victory over the Philistines, set up a commemorative stone, and called it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," where are your monumental pillars, carved with the story of what God hath done for your safety and comfort? Oh, by every tear which God hath wiped from your eyes, by every anxiety which he has soothed, by every fear which he has dispelled, by every want which he has supplied, by every mercy which he has bestowed, strengthen yourselves for all that awaits you through the remainder of your pilgrimage: look onwards, if it must be so, to new trials, to increased perplexities, yea, even to death itself: but look on what is past as well as on what is to come; and you will be enabled to say of Him in whose hand are your times, his future dealings will be, what his former have been, fulfilments of the promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Now up to this point we have been professedly considering only the caution which christians should derive from our text: but we have been insensibly drawn into speaking of the comfort, to which we had proposed to devote the concluding part of our discourse. It would not be very easy to keep the two quite distinct: but you will observe that we have given great prominence to the caution, and that it is one which, if you value your spiritual peace, you will do well to appropriate to yourselves. The caution is, that christians should never try themselves by supposed circumstances, but always by their actual: if they have the grace requisite for present trials and duties, they have all which God has covenanted to bestow, and must neither murmur, nor wonder, if he do not bestow more. God is faithful, if he give sufficient for to-day; man is sinful, if uneasy because unprovided for to-morrow.

But when we have taken to ourselves the caution, how abundant is the comfort which the text should supply; at the risk of repetition, let us dwell for a few moments on what a christian, in a world of wo, cannot weary of hearing. We must necessarily admit that our

present condition is one of exposure to difficulty and disaster. It is not a mere poetic expression, it is the sober assertion of melancholy fact, when Job exclaims, "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards." As a direct consequence on our being fallen creatures, much of bitterness is mixed with our portion; whilst moreover it seems necessary for the ends of moral discipline, that we should have to encounter disappointments and sorrows. But then it is a just expectation, that christianity, the system devised by God for the repair of the injuries wrought by transgression, will contain much to mitigate the griefs of human life. And it is hardly needful for us to say how thoroughly this expectation is fulfilled. Christianity does not indeed offer exemption from trouble, even to those most sincere and earnest in its profession. The best christian must expect his share of such troubles as are the lot of humanity—nay, he may even have a greater than the ordinary portion, inasmuch as there are ends, in his case, to be observed by affliction, which exist not in that of one at enmity with God. But it is beautiful to observe how little there would be that could be regarded as unhappiness amongst christians, if they made full use of the supports and consolations provided by the Gospel. If a man had only thorough faith in the declaration of our text: if he would apply that declaration to his own case, in both its caution and its comfort, he could neither be overborne by existing trouble, nor be dismayed by prospective. To those who "wait upon the Lord" there is always given strength adequate to the trials of to-day, and there ought to be no anxiety as to the trials of to-morrow. They have not already in hand the grace that may be needed for future duties and dangers; but they know it to be in better keeping than their own, and certain to be furnished precisely when required. O the peace which a true christian might possess, if he would take God at his word, and trust him to make good his promises. It is hard to say what could then ruffle him, or what, at least, could permanently disturb. Day

by day his duties might be more arduous, his temptations stronger, his trials more severe. But he would ascertain that the imparted strength grew at the same rate, so that he was always equal to the duties, victorious over the temptations, and sustained under the trials. As it is, you will find, as we have already more than once observed, that the greatest part of the uneasiness and unhappiness which christians experience springs from the future rather than the present. There will, of course, be absorbing moments, in passing through which the soul will be so engrossed by the immediate events as to have no thought for those which may follow. But the ordinary disposition is towards anticipating whilst enduring, so that the actual pressure is increased by the fears and forebodings of things in reserve. And it is quite natural that such should be the case. That she is always anticipating, always stretching into the future, is the soul's great witness to herself of her being immortal. It is nature's voice, strenuously giving testimony to another state of being. But when the principle of faith has been divinely implanted, it ought, in certain cases and degrees, to keep under this proneness to anticipate. It cannot repress the soarings of the spirit, the mysterious wanderings, the gazings at far-off possibilities: and it would not be for our happiness, it would only be for our degradation, that the soul's wings should be confined and her vision limited, so that she could neither travel nor look beyond the scenes of to-day. But faith ought so to people all the future with the presence, the guardianship, the love, and the faithfulness of God, that the soul, in her journeyings and her searchings, should find no cause for anxiety and no ground for fear.

This is the privilege, and this should be the aim of the christian, not to shut out the future, as though he dared not look on what it may contain; but to take the future, as well as the present, as his own; to feel that the same God inhabits both, and that, wheresoever God is, there must be safety for his people. But alas, through the weakness of their faith, christians live far below their privilege; and hence, when they look into the future, it seems full of boding forms and threatening sha-



dows ; and the survey only makes them less resolute under present troubles, and less alive to present mercies. If this be a just description of any amongst yourselves, we beseech them to give great attention to our text, and to strive to base a rule for their practice on the principle which it announces as pervading God's dealings. We say to you with respect to your duties, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." The christian, when in health, fears that he should not bear sickness as he ought ; in sickness he fears, that, if restored to health, he should not keep his vows and resolutions : when not exposed to much temptation, he fears that he should fall if he were ; when apparently tasked to the utmost, he fears that exemption would only generate sloth. But let him be of good cheer : our text is a voice from the unknown futurity, and should inspire him with confidence. Sickness may be at hand, but so also is the strength for sickness ; and thou shalt be enabled to take thy sickness patiently. You may be just recovering from sickness ; and life—for it is often harder to face life than death ; he who felt nerved to die, may be afraid to live—life may be coming back upon you with its long array of difficulties, and toils, and dangers ; but be of good cheer, the Author of life is the Author of grace ; he who renews the one will impart the other, that your days may be spent in his service. And sorrows may be multiplied ; yes, I cannot look on this congregation, composed of young and old, of parents and children, of husbands and wives, of brothers and sisters, without feeling that much bitterness is in store. I can see far enough into the future, to discern many funeral processions winding from your doors : I miss well-known faces from the weekly assembly, and the mournful habits of other parts of the family explain but too sadly the absence. But be of good cheer : the widow shall not be desolate, the fatherless shall not be deserted ; when the grave opens, there shall be the opening of fresh springs of comfort ; when the clouds gather, there shall be the falling of fresh dews of grace ; for heaven and earth may pass away, but no jot, and no tittle, of the promise can fail. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

And if you ask proof that we are not too bold in our prophecy, we might appeal, as we have already appealed, to the registered experience whether of the living or the dead. This experience will go yet further, and bear us out in predicting peace in death as well as support through life. I have to pass through the trial from which nature recoils : the earthly house must be taken down, and the soul struggle away from the body, and appear at the tribunal of my Judge. How shall I feel at such a moment as this ? Indeed I dare not conjecture. The living know not, cannot know, what it is to die : we must undergo, before we can imagine, the act of dissolution : life is an enigma in its close, as in its commencement ; we cannot remember what it was to enter, we cannot anticipate what it will be to quit this lower world. Yet if there be strength and collectedness in that fearful extremity to meditate of God, "my meditation of him shall be sweet." I shall remember that God hath promised to "swallow up death in victory ;" and that what he hath promised he will surely perform. May I not, therefore, be glad in the Lord ? The things that are temporal are fading from the view ; but the things that are eternal already crowd upon the vision. The ministering spirits wait to conduct me ; the heavenly minstrelsy sends me notes of gracious invitation ; one more thought of God as my Father and Friend, one more prayer to "the Resurrection and the Life," and I am in the presence of Him who has never failed in accomplishing his word to his people. Bear witness, yes, we must appeal to the inhabitants of heavenly places, to glorified spirits who have fought the last fight, and now "rest from their labors." We will ask them how they prevailed in the combat with death ; how, weak and worn as they were, they held fast their confidence in the hour of dissolution, and achieved a victory, and soared to happiness ? Listen for their answer : the ear of faith may catch it, though it be not audible by the organ of sense. We were weak in ourselves ; we entered the dark valley, to all appearance unprepared for wrestling with the terrors with which it seemed thronged. But wonderfully did God fulfil his promises. He was with us ;

and he ministered whatever was necessary to the sustaining our faith and securing our safety. And now, be ye animated by our experience. If ye would win our crown, and share our gladness, persevere in simple reliance upon Him who is alone "able to keep you from falling;" and ye also shall find that there is no season too full of dreariness and difficulty for the accomplishment of the words, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

## SERMON X.

### PLEADING BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS.

"Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."—Micah, 6: 2, 3.

Amongst all the pathetic expostulations and remonstrances which occur in the writings of the prophets, none ever seems to us so touching as this, which is found in the first chapter of the book of Isaiah—"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." You will at once understand, that, in our estimation, the pathos is derived from the reference made to irrational creatures, to the ox, and the ass, which have not been endowed, as man hath been, with the high faculty of reason. It is an extraordinary proof of human perverseness and ingratitude, that there should not be as much of attachment, and of acknowledgment of ownership, manifested by men towards God, as by the beasts of the field towards those who show them kindness, or supply them with food. And we feel that no accumulation of severe epithets, no labored upbraidings, no variety of reproaches, could have set in so affecting a light the treatment which the Creator receives from his creatures, as the simple contrast thus drawn between man and the brute.

But whenever Scripture—and the

cases are not rare—strives to move us by allusions to the inferior creation, there is a force in the passages which should secure them our special attention. When Jeremiah uses language very similar to that which we have just quoted from Isaiah—"Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord"—he delivers a sterner rebuke than if he had dealt out a series of vehement invectives. To what end hath man been gifted with superior faculties, made capable of observing the dealings of his Maker, and receiving the communications of his will, if the birds of the air, guided only by instinct, are to excel him in noting "the signs of the times," and in moving and acting as those signs may prescribe? And could any severer censure be delivered, when he gives no heed to intimations and warnings from God, than is passed on him by the swallow and the crane, who, observing the changes of season, know when to migrate from one climate to another?

Is there not again a very peculiar



force in this well-known address of Solomon to the indolent man? "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." The sagacious king might have given us a long dissertation on the evil of slothfulness and the duty of industry: but he could not have spoken more impressively than by simply referring us to an insignificant, but ever active, insect, and leaving that insect to put us to shame, if disposed to waste hours in idleness. And who has not felt, whilst reading our Lord's discourses to his disciples, that never did that divine being speak more effectively, or touchingly, than when he made, as it were, the fowls of the air, and the flowers of the field, utter admonitions, and reprove want of faith? It ought to assure us, nobler and more important as we manifestly are, of God's good will towards us, and his watchful care over us, to observe, with how unwearied a bounty he ministers to the winged things that range the broad firmament, and in how glorious an attire he arrays those productions which are to wither in an hour. And could our Savior have composed a homily which should have more keenly rebuked all mistrust of God, or more persuasively have recommended our casting on him our cares, than this his beautiful appeal to the birds and the flowers? "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and God feedeth them. Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; yet I say unto you that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these."

In these latter words Christ goes yet lower in the scale of creation than either of the prophets whom we quoted as reproving or teaching man through the inferior creatures. It is yet more humiliating to be instructed by the lily than by the bird or the insect: and man may well indeed blush, if ignorant or unmindful of truths which may be learnt from the grass beneath his feet. But there are instances in Scripture of an appeal to what is below even this, to the inanimate creation, as though man might be rebuked and taught by

the sun and stars, by the rocks and the waters. When Joshua, knowing the time of his death to be near, had gathered the Israelites, and caused them solemnly to renew their covenant with God, he "took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord." And then he proceeded to address the congregation in these remarkable words: "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." So boldly and unreservedly had the people avouched their determination of serving the Lord and obeying his voice, that the very stones might be supposed to have heard the vow, and to be ready, in the event of that vow being broken, to give evidence against the treacherous multitude. Could the dying leader have expressed more strongly the strictness of the obligation under which the people had brought themselves, and the perfidy of which they would be guilty in turning aside to idolatry, than by thus gifting inanimate matter with the powers of hearing and speech, and representing it as becoming vocal, that it might denounce the iniquity of infringing the covenant just solemnly made? The stone is thus converted into an overwhelming orator; in its stillness and muteness, it addresses us more energetically and persuasively than the most impassioned of speakers.

Or, to take another instance, when the Psalmist calls upon every thing, animate and inanimate, to join in one chorus of thanksgiving to the Almighty, who does not feel that the summoning the senseless and irrational is the most powerful mode of exhorting those blessed with life and intelligence, and of rebuking them, if they offer not praise? "Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and vapors, stormy wind fulfilling his word." Could any address be more stirring? Could any labored exposition of the duty of thanksgiving be as effective as this call to the heavenly bodies, yea, even to the fire, and the hail, and the storm, to bring their tribute of praise? for who amongst God's rational crea-

tures will dare to be silent, if every star, as it walks its course, and every breeze, as it sweeps the earth, and every cloud, as it darkens the firmament, may be regarded as attesting the goodness and publishing the glories of the universal Lord?

We thus wish you to perceive, that, in appealing to the inanimate creation, the inspired writers take a most effective mode of inculcating great truths, and conveying stern reproofs. And never should we more feel that the lessons, which they are about to deliver, are of extraordinary moment, than when they introduce them, as Isaiah does his prophecies, with a "Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth;" never should we be more conscious that they are just in accusing men of wilful ignorance and determined unbelief, than when they turn to the inferior tribes, and cite them as witnesses against rational beings.

Now you will readily perceive that our text has naturally suggested these remarks on the frequent references in the Bible, whether to animate or inanimate things, when man is to be exhorted, and especially when he is to be rebuked. In the preceding verse, the prophet Micah had received his commission in these remarkable terms—"Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice." Nothing can be more adapted to awaken attention, and prepare us for surprising disclosures. What lofty, what confounding argument is this, which must be maintained in the audience of the mountains and hills? Or, could any thing more persuade us of the obduracy of those with whom the prophet had to reason, than this appeal to inanimate matter, as though the very rocks might be as much expected to hearken, as the idolatrous generation to whom he was sent? In the first verse of our text, the prophet literally obeys the command thus received: for he exclaims, "Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel."

"The Lord hath a controversy with his people;"\* he is about to enter into

debate with them, to bring forward his grievances, and to allow them to bring forward theirs, so that the cause may be fairly tried, and a verdict given as to who has done the wrong. In what court, if we may use the expression, shall such a cause be tried? When one of the contending parties is none other than the everlasting God, it should be at some stupendous tribunal that the pleading takes place. Let then the mightiest eminences of the earth be the walls within which the controversy proceeds. "Arise, contend thou before the mountains." It is as though the prophet had been bidden to select some valley, surrounded on all sides by hills which lost themselves in the clouds; that there, as in a magnificent hall, worthy in some degree of the greatness and strangeness of the cause, the living God and his rebellious people might stand side by side, and implead one the other. And the mountains are to do more than form the walls of the judicial chamber. They are to be the audience, they are to be witnesses in this unparalleled trial. So certain was God, when thus bringing himself into public controversy with Israel, that he should be justified in his dealings, and clear in his judgments; so certain, moreover, was he, that no evidence would convince those who were set against his service; that he summoned the hills and strong foundations of the earth to be present, that he might not want voices to pronounce his acquittal, however human tongues might keep a guilty silence. There is something singularly striking and sublime in all this. My brethren, give your close attention to the scene. We are admitted, as it were, into the court; did ever trial go forward in so august a chamber? The walls are the everlasting hills, and the roof is the broad firmament with all its fretwork of stars. And the parties who are to come into court! The Creator himself, amazing condescension! is one of these parties; the other is the whole Jewish nation, or—for we may fairly transfer the occurrence to our own day—the whole christian world. Yes, matters are to be brought to an

handled by Saurin in his sermon on "God's controversy with Israel," that one can scarcely hope to say any thing which has not been already and better said by that most powerful of preachers.

\* This portion of the subject has been so largely



issue between God and his creatures: he knows that they complain of his government, and refuse compliance with his laws; and therefore has he descended from his throne, and laid aside for the time his rights and prerogatives, and placed himself at the bar with those who have resisted his authority, that the real state of the case may be thoroughly examined, and sentence be given according to the evidence produced.

Let then the trial commence: God is to speak first; and so strange is it that he should thus enter into controversy with man, that the very hills and strong foundations of the earth assume a listening posture. And now what words do you expect to hear? What can you look for from the Divine Speaker, if not for a burst of vehement reproach, a fearful enumeration of foul ingratitude, and base rebellion, and multiplied crime? When you think that God himself is confronted with a people for whom he has done unspeakable things, and from whom he has received in return only enmity and scorn, you must expect him to open his cause with a statement of sins, and a catalogue of offences, at the hearing of which the very mountains would quake. But it is not so. And among all the transitions which are to be found on the pages of Scripture, and which furnish the most touching exhibitions of divine tenderness and long-suffering, perhaps none is more affecting than that here presented. We have been brought into a most stupendous scene: mountain has been piled upon mountain, that a fit chamber might be reared for the most singular trial which earth ever witnessed. The parties have come into court; and whilst one is a company of human beings like ourselves, we have been amazed at finding in the other the ever-living Creator, who has consented to give his people the opportunity of pleading with him face to face, and of justifying, if they can, their continued rebellion. And now the mind is naturally wrought up to a high pitch of excitement; we almost tremble as we hearken for the first words which the Almighty is to utter; they must, we feel sure, be words of accusation, and wrath, and vengeance, words deep as the thunder and fiery as the light-

ning; when, lo, as though the speaker were overcome with grief, as though the sight of those who had injured him moved him to sorrow, not to wrath, he breaks into the pathetic exclamation, an exclamation every letter of which seems a tear, "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

We desire, brethren, that you should avail yourselves, on the present occasion, of the wonderful permission thus accorded by God. Ordinarily we are fearful of allowing you to bring complaints against your Maker. But we know that you make them in your hearts; and, now, at last, you have a full opportunity of giving them vent; you are standing in controversy with God, and God himself gives you leave to testify against him. The question therefore now is, what charges any of you have to bring against God, against his dealings with you, against his government, against his laws. If you have any excuses to offer for still living in sin, for impenitence, for covetousness, for sensuality, you are free to produce them; God himself invites the statement, and you need not fear to speak. But, forasmuch as you are confronted with God, you must expect that whatsoever you advance will be rigidly examined; and that, when you have brought your accusation against God, God will bring his against you. These preliminaries of the great trial having been defined and adjusted, we may suppose the controversy to proceed: men shall first testify against God, and God then shall testify against men.

Now you will understand that we are here supposing men to come forward, and to attempt to justify what is wrong in their conduct, by laying the blame, in some way, upon God. It is this which God, in our text, invites the Israelites to do; and therefore it is this which, if the trial be regarded as taking place in our own day, we must suppose done by the existing generation. And if men would frankly speak out, as they are here bidden to do, they would have to acknowledge a secret persuasion that they have been dealt with unjustly, and that there is much to palliate, if not wholly to excuse, their continued violation of the known

laws of God. They argue that they have inherited, through no fault of their own, a proneness to sin; that they have been born with strong passions and appetites, and placed in the midst of the very objects which their desires solicit; and they are disposed to ask, whether it can be quite fair to expect them to be virtuous in spite of all these disadvantages, quite just to condemn them for doing that which, after all, they had scarce the power of avoiding. Well, let them urge their complaint: God is willing to hear; but let them, on their part, give heed to what he will plead in reply. The accusation is this—human nature became corrupt through the transgression of Adam, a transgression in which we had certainly no personal share. As a consequence on this, we come into the world with corrupt propensities, propensities moreover which there is every thing around us to develope and strengthen; and nevertheless we are to be condemned for obeying inclinations which we did not implant, and gratifying passions which are actually a part of our constitution. If we had not inherited a tainted nature, or if we had been, at least, so circumstanced that the incentives to virtue might have been stronger than the temptations to vice, there would have been justice in the expecting us to live soberly and righteously, and in the punishing us if we turned aside from a path of self-denial. But assuredly, when the case is precisely the reverse, when there has been communicated to us the very strongest tendency to sin, and we have been placed amongst objects which call out that tendency, whilst the motives to withstanding it act at a great comparative disadvantage, it is somewhat hard that we should be required to resist what is natural, and condemned for obeying it—ay, and we think that here, in the presence of the mountains and strong foundations of the earth, we may venture to plead the hardship, seeing that God himself hath said, "Testify against me."

But now the accusation must be sifted: it is a controversy which is being carried on; and whatever is urged, either on the one side or on the other, has to be subjected to a rigid inquiry. It is, of course, to be acknowledged,

that, as a consequence on the apostacy of our forefather, we receive a depraved nature, prone to sin and averse from holiness. It has undoubtedly become natural to us to disobey God, and unnatural, or contrary to nature, to obey him. And we are placed in a world which presents, in rich profusion, the counterpart objects to our strongest desires, and which, soliciting us through the avenues of our senses, has great advantages over another state of being, which must make its appeal exclusively to our faith. All this must be readily admitted: there is no exaggeration, and no misrepresentation. But if this may be said on the side of man, is there nothing to be said on the side of God? Has God made it absolutely unlawful that you should gratify the desires of your nature? is it not rather the immoderate gratification which he denounces as criminal? and is it not actually a law of your constitution, that this immoderate gratification defeats itself, so that your choicest pleasures, taken in excess, pall upon the appetite, and produce but disgust? In all accusations which you bring against God, you assume that he requires the surrender of whatsoever constitutes the happiness of beings so conditioned as yourselves: whereas it is susceptible of the fullest demonstration, that the restraints which his laws put on your desires, and the bounds which they set to the indulgence of your wishes, do nothing but prevent these desires and wishes from becoming your tyrants, and therefore your tormentors. And what have you to say against restrictions, which after all are but safeguards for yourselves and your fellow-men—restrictions, the universal submission to which would turn the world into one peaceful and flourishing community, and the setting which at nought is certain to be followed by the worst consequences to individuals and society? It is idle to contend that God requires from you a moderation and self-denial, which, constituted and circumstanced as you are, it is unjust to expect, when he asks only what you cannot grant without being incalculably benefited; nor refuse, without being as much injured.

We are not here speaking, be it observed, of the benefit and injury which



are distinctly annexed, as reward and penalty, to the several divine laws; for we could hardly expect you to admit that these bear directly on our argument. We speak of the benefit and injury which follow in the way of natural consequence, and which therefore may be regarded as resulting from the human constitution, rather than from specific enactments of the universal Ruler. And we may confidently assert, that, if there were nothing to be considered but the amount of enjoyment, that man would consult best for himself who should impose such restraints on his desires as God's law prescribes, inasmuch as he would never then become the slave of those desires: unlimited indulgence makes slavery, and slavery misery.

And though you may further plead the amazing power of temptation, and the known inability of man to resist the solicitations of the objects of sense, we plainly tell you that herein you exaggerate the strength of an enemy, only that you may apologize for defeat. You speak as if God offered man no assistance, whereas the whole of his revelation is one proffer of such helps as will suffice to secure victory. It is altogether a misrepresentation, to dwell on the vehemence of passions and the energy of solicitations, as though there were nothing to be said on the other side; whilst it is certain that there has been made such provision on our behalf, that he who will seek the appointed aids may make sure of conquest. Add to this, for we have higher ground on which to meet you, that God has not required you to live righteously, without proposing an adequate motive. Estimate at what you will the present sacrifice—though we are persuaded, as we have already stated, that you are asked to surrender nothing which you would be the happier for keeping—but make what estimate you choose of the present sacrifice, you cannot say that God does not offer vastly more than its compensation, in offering eternal life to such as subjugate themselves. Take then the matter under every possible point of view, and we think that you must be cast in the controversy into which you have entered before the mountains and the strong foundations of the earth. You have urged your

plea, and now it behoves you to be silent whilst God shall urge his. You have virtually contended that God has done something unjust by placing you in your present condition, and that he has wearied you by imposing on you grievous commands. But hear, if we may venture on so bold an expression, hear his defence. He rises up to plead with you, and these are his words.

I did all which could be done for your forefather Adam, gifting him with high powers, and subjecting him to slight trial. If therefore you have inherited a corrupt nature, it was not through defect in my arrangements for your good. I did what promised most for your advantage, and what you would have thankfully consented to, had you been present when Adam was made your representative. And though, when you had fallen, I might justly have left you to your misery, I determined and effected your redemption, though it could only be achieved through the death of my well-beloved Son. By and through this redemption, I provided for you the means of subduing passions however strong, and withstanding temptations however powerful. And whilst I made it your duty, I made it also, in every sense, your interest, "to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world." My commandments "are not grievous:" "in keeping of them there is great reward." Nothing is forbidden, which, if permitted, would make you happier; nothing enjoined which could be dispensed with without injury. The ways in which I require you to walk are "ways of pleasantness" and peace; and they terminate in a happiness which would be incalculably more than a compensation, even if the path lay through unvaried wretchedness. Where then is the justice of your complaint, or rather of your accusation? O it is thus that God may expose the hollowness and falsehood of all that reasoning, by which those who love sin would prove themselves excusable in yielding to its power. I hear him appeal to the mountains and the hills, as though these were more likely than the stony heart of man to answer him with truth. And when he has shown how much he hath done for man, what provisions he has made for his resisting and overcoming

evil, what present and future recompenses are annexed to the keeping his commandments, I seem to hear the mountains and the hills giving forth their loud verdict—yea, the forests which are upon them bow in assent, and the rivers which flow from them murmur their testimony, and from summit to summit is echoed the approving plaudit, as the Almighty again utters the challenge, "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

And thus far the accusation has only been, that God asks from man what, under man's circumstances, ought not to be expected: man being, by nature, strongly inclined to sin; and God's law requiring him to do violence to inclinations, for whose existence he is in no degree answerable. But the court is not dissolved, and fresh indictments may be brought. Let, then, men approach, and complain, if they will, of the dealings of God, of the unequal distribution of his gifts, of the prevalence of misery, and the successfulness of wickedness. It is not to be disputed, that numbers are disposed to murmur against the dispensations of providence, and even to derive from them arguments against the impartiality of God's moral government, or the advantageousness of adhering to his service. They count it surpassingly strange that so much wretchedness should exist beneath the sway of a Being as benevolent as powerful; and, if possible, yet more strange, that no amount of piety should secure an individual against his share in this wretchedness; nay, that, in many cases, piety should seem only to make that share greater. Well, there is now nothing to prevent the complaint from being urged; God has himself invited you to state every grievance, so that, without incurring his displeasure, you may bring your charges against his dealings with yourselves. We may however suppose you, in this instance, to limit the charge to his dealings with those who are emphatically his people: you will hardly throw blame upon him for that misery which results purely from vice, and which would almost wholly disappear if men submitted to his laws. If you put out of the account that unhappiness which is the direct consequence on

wickedness, and for which therefore it would be palpably unjust to reproach God, you have all the human misery which can excite wonder, or furnish, even in appearance, any groundwork of complaint.

And undoubtedly there is thus left no inconsiderable sum: the righteous may be exempt from many afflictions which their own sins bring upon the wicked; but nevertheless their share of trouble is very large, and includes much which is peculiar to themselves. It is against this that men are disposed to make exceptions; arguing that it can scarce be equitable in God to allot so much of trouble and pain to those who love him in sincerity, and serve him with diligence. They object indeed, as we have already said, to the whole course of the divine government; contending that there is too much of permitted evil, and too little of bestowed good to make that government worthy of God. But if the objection be of weight in any case, it must be in that of the righteous; so that to remove it in this will be to destroy it in every other. And if it be easy for God to vindicate himself against any charge, it is against that which impeaches his dealings with his people. He has no difficulty in proving that "he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Let him enter into controversy with you, and then see whether you will venture to maintain your accusations. It is in terms such as these that he may be supposed to justify his dealings.

It is true that those whom I love I chasten, even "as a father the son in whom he delighteth." But it is because I have to deal with an ungrateful and stubborn nature, which cannot be trained by any other discipline for the joys of mine own immediate presence. If the hearts of my people were not so prone to the attaching themselves to earth, I should not use such rough means of loosening the bonds: if they were not so ready to fall into slumber, I should not so often speak to them with a startling voice. I might indeed have annexed temporal prosperity to genuine religion, so that whosoever served me in truth should have been thereby secured against the chief forms of trouble. But wherein would have



been the mercifulness of such an arrangement? Who knows not that, even as it is, life with all its cares is clung to with extraordinary tenacity, and that the present, with all its sorrows, is practically almost preferred to the future? Those who have set their "affections on things above," can hardly bring themselves to the entering on their possession, though urged by various disappointments and disasters; and they who have been the longest engaged in preparing for death, and who seem to have least of what can make earth desirable, show a reluctance, as the time of departure approaches, which proves them still unduly attached to what they must leave. What would it be, if the arrangement were altered, and piety conferred an exemption from suffering? There would then be a continual strengthening of the ties which bind the soul to earth: the longer the term of human life, the greater would be the unwillingness to depart, and the more imperfect the preparation for a higher state of being. And though it be thus needful that many should be the troubles of the righteous, are those troubles unmitigated? are there no compensating circumstances which make a father's chastisement prove a father's love? It is in the season of deep sorrow that I communicate the richest tokens of my favor. Then it is, when the spirit is subdued and the heart disquieted, that I find opportunity of fulfilling the choicest promises registered in my word; so that even mourners themselves often break into the exclamation, "It is good for us that we were afflicted." If I take away earthly wealth, it is that there may be more room for heavenly: if I remove the objects of ardent attachment, it is that I may fill the void with more of myself. Thus with every sorrow there is an appropriate consolation; every loss makes way for a gain; and every blighted hope is but parent to a better.

And what is to be said, men and brethren, against the vindication which God thus advances of his dealings? Is the complaint substantiated which you ventured to produce in that magnificent chamber which he reared for his controversy with his people? Let the very mountains judge, let the strong founda-

tions of the earth give a verdict. "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee?" I have suffered trouble to come upon you, but only as an instrument for good; and never have I left you to bear it alone, but have always been at hand to comfort and uphold. I have suffered death to enter your households, but only that you might be trained for immortality; and there has not been a tear which you have been forced to shed, which I have not been ready to wipe from the eye. I have suffered schemes to be disappointed, expectations to be baffled, friends to prove treacherous; but only that you might more prize and strive after the "better and enduring substance;" and never have I thus brought you into the wilderness, without going before you in the pillar of fire and cloud. Do ye then arraign my dealings? do ye accuse them of severity? The inanimate creation shall utter my vindication. The solid rocks which have beforetime been rent at my voice; the lofty eminences which have bowed and done homage at my presence; the trees which have waved exultingly, and the floods which have lifted up their waters, at fresh manifestations of my greatness—to these I appeal; let these decide in this strangest of controversies. And so evident is it, brethren, that God chastens for your good, and afflicts only to bless, that we seem to hear the sound as of an earthquake in reply to this appeal, the sound as of rocking forests, the sound as of rushing waters; and all gathered into one emphatic decision that your Creator is clear in this matter, and that, therefore, it must be on some fresh charge, if you would so testify against him as to prove that you have ground of complaint.

But we must change the scene. Having allowed you to produce your accusations against the laws and dealings of God, it is time that we suppose God the accuser, and put you on your defence. We stated, in an earlier part of our discourse, that, since there was to be a controversy, both parties must be heard; that each must produce his cause, and plead his matter of complaint. The court has been hitherto occupied with your alleged grievances,

but you have failed to make good any charge against God. But you now appear in an opposite character: God has accusations to prefer against you; prepare then yourselves, and meditate your answer. Ah, my brethren, however bold you were before, when you were permitted, yea, bidden to testify against God, you seem ready to shrink away and hide yourselves, now that God is about to testify against you. These mighty rocks, these towering hills, by which you are encircled, you would fain call upon them to cover you, that you might be hidden from one who can bring against you, as you too well know, such overwhelming charges. But this cannot be. God condescended to listen to your accusations, and you must stay, at whatever cost, and abide his.

With what words shall the Almighty commence his indictment, if not with those which were the first which he charged Isaiah to utter? "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." There is not one of you on whom he has not bestowed countless mercies: he has been about the path, and about the bed, of each: and had it not been for the watchfulness of his providence, and the tenderness of his love, there is not one of you who would not have been long ago crushed by calamities, and stripped of all the elements of happiness. But you have been guarded and sustained from infancy upwards; you have been fed by his bounty, warmed by his sun, shielded by his power; and thus has he been to each of you as a father,—a father in comparison of whom the kindest earthly parent might be counted a stranger. And what he has done for you in temporal respects may almost be forgotten, when you come to consider what he has done for you in spiritual. There is not one amongst you for whom he did not give up his only and well-beloved Son to ignominy and death: not one on whom he has not wrought by his preventing grace: not one to whom he has not sent the tidings of redemption: not one to whom he has not offered immeasurable happiness in his own glorious kingdom. And what has he received

in return for all this? However persuaded and thankful we may be, that there are those in this assembly who have been softened and subdued by what God hath done on their behalf, and who have cordially devoted themselves to his service, we dare not doubt that numbers, perhaps the majority, perhaps the great majority, are still at enmity with the Being who has striven by every means to reconcile them to himself. There are the young, who are refusing to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. There are the old, who think that repentance may be safely deferred, whilst they enjoy a little more pleasure, or accumulate a little more wealth. There are the rich, who make gold their hope, and fine gold their confidence; there are the poor, whom even destitution cannot urge to seek treasure above.

And what can such say, now that they are standing in controversy with God? Let us pause yet a moment longer, that we may hear what God has to urge against men. There occur to the mind those striking words in the book of Revelation, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." God seems to enumerate the modes in which he has knocked at the door of our hearts, and to appeal to them in proof how just are his complaints of our obduracy. We might almost say that he knocks by every object in creation, and by every provision in redemption. If I look abroad upon the magnificence of the heavens, there is not a star in all that glorious troop which comes marching through immensity, which does not summon me to acknowledge and admire the power of Godhead, and which may not therefore be said to make an appeal at the door of the heart, audible by all who yield homage to a Creator. If I survey the earth on which we dwell, and study its marvellous adaptations to the wants of its inhabitants, and scrutinize what goes on in the vast laboratories of nature; or if I descend into myself, "fearfully and wonderfully made," and examine the curious mechanism, the beneficent contrivances, and the exquisite symmetries, which distinguish the body—why, there is nothing without, and there is nothing within, which does not call to the remembering and reverencing God: eve-



ry feature of the landscape, every tree of the forest, every flower of the garden, every joint and every muscle of my frame, all are gifted with energy in proclaiming that there is a Supreme Being, infinite in wisdom and goodness as well as in might; and through each, therefore, may this Being be affirmed to knock at the heart, demanding its love and allegiance. And God knocks, as you will all allow, by the visitations of his Providence: he knocks, moreover, by the suggestions of conscience and the strivings of the Spirit. Who is there of you who will presume to say that he never heard this knocking? We know better. We know that, in the worst storm and mutiny of passion, when the heart itself has been the scene of conflict and turmoil, the wild and battling inmates have often been startled by an appeal from without; and that, for a moment at least, there has been the hush as of shame or of fear, so that there has been space for an energetic remonstrance, a remonstrance which, if it failed to produce permanent order, left a heavier condemnation on the wretched slave of the flesh and its lusts. It is not then difficult for God, or for Christ, to show that this has indeed been his course with you all—"I stand at the door and knock." But you have opened the door to a thousand other guests; you have received them into the recesses of the heart; but Him you have coldly repulsed, or superciliously neglected. O, we fear that he may say to too many of you, I stood, and knocked in the hour of prosperity, but ye gave no heed to a message delivered in the form of abundance and gladness. I came in the darkness and stillness of adversity, thinking that you might open to me when you were careworn and sad; but you chose other comforters, and I asked you in vain to receive "the Lord of peace." I called you through all the glories and all the wonders of the visible universe; but it availed nothing that I wrote my summons on the firmament, and syllabled it alike in the voices and the silences of immensity: "ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." I gave you my word, I sent to you my Gospel; but it was to no purpose that I knocked with the cross, the cross on which

my Son was stretched to deliver you from death: you were too busy, or too proud, or too unbelieving, to give ear to the invitation; and I pleaded in vain, though I pleaded as the conqueror of your every foe. And in many an hour of temptation, in many a moment of guilty pleasure, amid the noise of business and in the retirements of solitude, I have knocked so loudly, through the instrumentality of conscience, that you could not but start, and make some faint promise of admitting me hereafter; but, alas, when I looked for the opening of the door, you have but barred it more effectually against me.

Ah, if it be by such a reference to the modes in which he has knocked at your hearts, but knocked in vain, that God conducts his side of the controversy, what can you have to plead? It is in very moving terms that he urges his accusation. I have long and tenderly watched you. I have spared no pains to turn you from evil. By mercies and by judgments, by promises and by threatenings, I have striven to fix your thoughts on the things which belong to your peace. I counted nothing too costly to be done for your rescue: I spared not mine own Son; and I have borne, year after year, with your waywardness and ingratitude, not willing that you should perish, though you have acted as if resolved that you would not be saved. And now "testify against me." "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Is it that you have not been warned, though I have sent my servants to publish my terrors? is it that you have not been entreated, though I have charged them with the tidings of redemption? This, to sum all, is my accusation against you. Ye have derived your being from me, ye have been sustained in being by me, ye have been continually the objects of my bounty, continually the objects of my long-suffering; and nevertheless, ye are still unmindful of my hand, still living "without God in the world," still walking in ways of your own devising, still crucifying my Son afresh, and putting away from you the offer of everlasting life.

What have you to say against this

accusation? we do not believe that you will attempt to say any thing. We are persuaded, that, as it was with the man who had not on the wedding-garment, you will be speechless. Ay, but God shall not want an answer, he shall not want a verdict, because, self-condemned, you have no word to utter. Not in vain hath he summoned the mountains and the strong foundations of the earth to be present at his controversy with you. The very hills have witnessed his loving-kindness towards you, clothed as they have been, with the corn, and crested with the fruits, which he has bountifully provided for your sustenance. And on one of these mountains of the earth was the altar erected on which his Son died; and so fearful was the oblation, that Calvary shook at the cry of the mysterious victim. And now, therefore, whilst he charges you with ingratitude, whilst he arrays against you the continued provocations, the insult, the neglect, which he has received at your hands; whilst he speaks of abused mercies, of despised opportunities, of resisted entreaties; and you remain silent, unable to refute the charge, and yet unwilling to acknowledge its truth—there is a sound as of heaving rocks, and of foaming torrents, and of bursting volcanoes; nature, which became vocal when a Mediator died, utters a yet deeper groan now that a Mediator is rejected: and hill and forest, and rock and flood, send forth one mighty cry, the cry of amazement that men should "neglect so great salvation," the cry of acknowledgment that the Almighty has made good his accusations.

And are we here to dissolve the court? Man has failed to show wherein God has wearied him; but God has drawn a verdict from the inanimate creation that he himself has been wearied by man. It is a strange expression to use; but it is quite consistent with the language of Scripture, that we should speak of God as wearied by our sins. "Ye have wearied the Lord," we read in the prophet Malachi, "yet ye say, wherein have we wearied him?" "Hear," saith Isaiah, "O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men; but will ye weary my God also?" And did not God himself say, by the mouth of the same prophet, to

those who rendered him hypocritical service, "your new moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them?" We will not then dissolve the court. It is so startling a consideration, that we should be actually able to weary God; the thing, if done, must entail so terrible a condemnation, that we may well remain yet a few moments longer within the august chamber which was built for the controversy, to ponder our state, and examine what has been proved by these judicial proceedings. It is very clear, that, if God may be wearied, we may exhaust his patience, so that he may be provoked to leave us to ourselves, to withdraw from us the assistance of his grace, and to determine that he will make no further effort to bring us to repentance. And on this account especially it is, that there is such emphasis in the words of our Savior, "agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him." Try not his patience too far; venture not actually into court with him; but quickly, without any further delay, seek to compose your difference, "lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison." It is this counsel which we would pray God might be imprinted by our discourse on those of you who have not yet been reconciled to their Maker. You have indeed come this night into court, and you have been altogether cast in your suit. But the trial has not been that which will fix your portion for eternity. It has only been with the view of alarming you, of bringing you to see the perils of the position in which you stand, that God has now entered into controversy with you, and summoned you to plead with him before the mountains of the earth. And the verdict against you, which has been delivered by hill and forest, is but a solemn admonition, a warning which, if duly and instantly heeded, shall cause a wholly different decision, when you appear at that tribunal whose sentences must be final.

The mountains and the strong foundations of the earth, yea, the whole visible creation, may again be appealed to: they may again be witnesses, when



God shall arise to judgment, and call quick and dead to his bar. It gives a very sublime, though awful, character to the last assize, thus to regard it as imaged by the controversy in our text. I see a man brought to the judgment-seat of Christ: the accusation against him is, that he lived a long life in neglect and forgetfulness of God, enjoying many blessings, but never giving a thought to the source whence they came. Who are witnesses against him? Lo, the sun declares, every day I awakened him by my glorious shinings, flooding the heavens with evidences of a God: but he rose without a prayer from his couch; and he made no use of the light but to prosecute his plans of pleasure or gain. The moon and the stars assert that "nightly, to the listening earth" they repeated the story of their origin; but that, though they spangled the curtain which was drawn round his bed, he lay down, as he rose, with no word of supplication; and that often were the shadows of the night used only to conceal his guiltiness from man. Hills and valleys have a voice: forests and fountains have a voice: every feature of the variegated landscape testifies that it bore the impress of a God, but always failed to awaken any reverence for his name. There is not an herb, there is not a flower, which will be silent. The corn is asserting that its ripe ears were gathered without thankfulness: the spring is murmuring that its waters were drawn without gratitude: the vine is testify-

ing that its rich juices were distilled to produce a false joy. The precious metals of the earth are all stamped with accusation, for they were sought with a guilty avidity; the winds of heaven breathe a stern charge, for they were never laden with praises; the waves of the great deep toss themselves into witnesses, for they were traversed by ships that luxuries might be gathered, but not that christianity might be diffused. Take heed, man of the world, how thou dost thus arm all nature against thyself. Be warned by the voice which the inanimate creation is already uttering, and make peace with thine adversary "whilst thou art in the way with him." Thine adversary! and who is this? Not the sun, not the moon, not the troop of stars, not the forests, not the mountains: these are but witnesses on the side of thine adversary. The adversary himself—oh they are words which almost choke the utterance!—the adversary himself is the everlasting God. Yet he wishes to be your friend: he offers to be your friend: there is nothing but your own determination which can keep you at enmity. By the terrors of the last judgment, by all the hopes, by all the fears of eternity, do I conjure such of you as have not yet made peace with their God, to turn at once to the Mediator Christ: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;" and now he beseeches you through us, "Be ye reconciled unto God."

## SERMON XI.

### HEAVEN.

“And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”—Revelation, 22: 5.

Our position upon earth is represented, as you well know, in Scripture as that of combatants, of beings engaged in a great struggle, but to whom is proposed a vast recompense of reward. The imagery which St. Paul delights to use, when illustrating our condition, is derived from the public games so famous in antiquity. The competitors in a race, the opponents in wrestling, are the parties to whom he loves to liken himself and other followers of Christ. And the imagery is employed not only as aptly depicting a state of struggle and conflict; but because they who entered the lists in the public games were animated by the hope of prizes which success was to procure; and because, in like manner, it is the privilege of christians to know that, if they be faithful to the end, contest will issue in an “exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Shame upon the spiritual combatants, the apostle seems in one place to say, if they can be languid in exertion. A paltry recompense will urge the wrestler, or the runner, to submit to painful training, and to strain every muscle. Shall we then, with heaven full in view, grudge the toil, or spare the effort, which may be needful to secure a portion in its joys? “They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.”

If however the prize is to produce its just influence in animating to exertion, it must be often surveyed, that we may assure ourselves of its excellence, and therefore long more for its possession. The competitor in the games had the honored garland in

sight: if inclined for a moment to slacken, he had but to turn his eye on the coronet, and he pressed with new vigor towards the goal. It should be thus with the christian, with the spiritual competitor. He should have his thoughts much on heaven: he should refresh himself with frequent glimpses of the shining inheritance. By deep meditation, by prayerful study of the scriptural notices of another world, he should strive to prove to himself more and more that it is indeed a good land towards which he journeys. He should not be content with a vague and general belief, that the things reserved for those who love God must be worth all the efforts and sacrifices which attainment can demand. This will hardly suffice, when set against the pleasures and allurements of the world: he must be able to oppose good to good, and to satisfy himself on the evidence, as it were, of his own affections, that he prefers what is infinitely best in preferring the future to the present.

And certainly he may do this. Without speaking unadvisedly, or enthusiastically, nay, speaking only the words of soberness and truth, we may safely say that those who muse much on heaven, who ponder its descriptions, and strive to image its occupations and enjoyments, are often privileged with such foretastes of what God hath prepared for his people, as serve, like the clusters of Eshcol, to teach them practically the richness of Canaan. With them it is not altogether matter of report, that the inheritance of the saints is transcendently glorious: it is alrea-



dy true in part, that, "as they have heard, so have they seen in the city of their God." They have waited upon the Lord, until, according to the promise of Isaiah, they have been enabled to "mount up with wings as eagles;" they have gazed for a moment on the street of gold, and have heard the harpings of the innumerable multitude.

Now if it be thus of exceeding importance to the christian that he should often meditate upon heaven, it must be the duty of the minister to bring before him occasionally those descriptions of the world to come, which God has been pleased to furnish in his word. And a very delightful part this is of ministerial duty. We are often constrained to set forth the terrors of the Lord, though natural feeling would make us shrink from dwelling on the vengeance which will surely overtake the careless and unbelieving. We are obliged to insist very frequently on the first principles of christianity, "laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God." And it is not a rare thing, that sermons have to take a reproachful character, exhibiting the sins and inconsistencies of professors of godliness, upbraiding the defective practice of those who name the name of Christ, and urging them, in no measured terms, to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called." But it were a great mistake to imagine that the preacher consults his own inclination, in selecting such topics of discourse. Far more agreeable to him would it be to dilate upon privileges, to address his hearers simply as heirs of immortality, and to exhaust all his energy on the lively hope to which they are begotten. But this must not always be, whilst congregations are composed of the believing and the unbelieving, whilst probably the majority is with the latter, and whilst even the former come far short of "adorning the doctrine of God the Savior in all things." Still, as we have already said, the clergyman is not only permitted, he is bound, to take heaven occasionally as his theme: and a very refreshing thing to him it is, when he may devote a discourse to the joys which are in reserve for the righteous. Come then, men and brethren, we have no terrors for you

to-night, no reproaches, no threatenings. We are about to speak to you of the New Jerusalem, the celestial city, into which "shall enter nothing that defileth," but whose gates stand open to all who seek admission through the suretyship of Christ.

We select one verse from the glowing account which St. John has left us of the vision with which he was favored, after tracing, in mystic figures, the history of the church up to the general resurrection and judgment. The two last chapters of the book of Revelation, inasmuch as they describe what was beheld after the general judgment, must be regarded as relating strictly to the heavenly state. The book of Revelation is a progressive book: it goes forward regularly from one period to a following; and this should be always borne in mind when we strive to fix the meaning of any of its parts. It has so much the character of a history, that the dates, so to speak, of its chapters will often guide us to their just interpretation. And since the twentieth chapter closes with the setting up of the great white throne, and the judgment of every man according to his works, we conclude that what remains of the book belongs to that final condition of the saints, which we are wont to understand by heaven and its joys. This being allowed, we may go at once to the examining the assertions of our text, applying them without reserve to our everlasting inheritance. The assertions are of two kinds, negative and positive. They tell us what there is not in heaven, and what there is. Let these then furnish our topics of discourse, though in treating of the one we shall perhaps find it needful to trench on the other. Let us consider, in the first place, that there is no night in heaven, no candle, no light of the sun: let us consider, in the second place, that there the Lord God Almighty shall give the saints light, and that "they shall reign for ever and ever."

Now we may begin by observing to you, that, with our present constitution, there would be nothing cheering in an arrangement which took away night from our globe. The alternation of day and night, the two always making up the same period of twenty-four

hours, is among the most beautiful of the many proofs that God fitted the earth for man, and man for the earth. We know that other planets revolve in very different times on their axis, so that their days and nights are of very different lengths from our own. We could not live on one of those planets. We could not, at least, conform ourselves to the divisions of time: for we require a period of repose in every twenty-four hours, and could not subsist, if there were only to come such a period in every hundred, or in every thousand. The increased length of the period would avail us nothing: it would not be adapted to the human machine: we could not sleep for three of our present days, and so be fitted to keep awake for ten. Thus the present division of time has clearly been appointed with reference to our constitution: we have been made on purpose for a world which revolves in twenty-four hours, or that world, if you will, has been made on purpose for us.\* Since then we require the present alternation of light and darkness, we may fairly say that it is no pleasant image to the mind, that of a world without night: it is, at least, only by supposing a great change to pass on our constitution and faculties, that we can give to the image any thing of attractiveness.

And besides this, it is very easy to speak of night as the season of dreariness and gloom, as the representative of ignorance and error—but what should we be without night? Where is there so eloquent an instructor as night? What reveals so much of the workmanship of the ever-living God? Imagine this world to have been always without night, and what comparatively would its inhabitants have known of the universe? It would have seemed to them, at least to those on the irradiated hemisphere, that their own globe and the sun made up creation. They might have studied the wonders which overspread the earth, and have surveyed, with admiration and delight, the glorious face of the ever-changing landscape. But they could not have gazed on the mighty map of the firmament: they could scarcely have even conjectured that space, in its remotest

depths, was crowded with systems and constellations, and that the world on which they trode was but the solitary unit of a sum which imagination was too weak to tell up. So that night, with all its obscurity and concealment, reveals unspeakably more to us than day: then it is that the astronomer goes forth on his wondrous search, passing through region after region, studded splendidly with star and planet: the sun, by his very brightness, has hidden from him all this rich jewelry of the heavens; and it is not till set as a diadem round the forehead of darkness that he is able to look on its lustres. So that there is not necessarily any thing very desirable in the absence of night: it would be the reverse of a blessing to us in our present condition, and would imply the diminution rather than the enlargement of knowledge.

What then are we to learn from the statement, that there shall be no night in heaven? We learn much, whether you take it literally or metaphorically; whether, that is, it be the natural, or the figurative, night, whose total absence is affirmed. Night is now grateful, yea necessary, to us, as bringing quiet and repose to overwrought bodies and minds. We cannot prosecute any labor, however profitable, any study, however interesting, without granting ourselves periods of rest: we may sorely grudge the interruption; we may endeavor to abbreviate the periods: but nature imperiously claims her time of slumber, and is sure to avenge its undue abridgment by the weariness and waste of every power. But all this arises from the imperfectness of our present condition: we are so constituted that we cannot incessantly pursue either occupation or enjoyment, but must recruit ourselves by repose whether for business or pleasure. And it would evidently be to raise us very greatly in the scale of animated being, to make it no longer needful that we should have intervals of rest; body and soul being incapable of exhaustion, or rather of fatigue. What a mind would that be which could continue, hour after hour, yea, day after day, intent on the acquisition of knowledge, never pausing for a moment to give breathing time to its powers, but advancing in unwearyed march from one height

\* See Whewell's Bridgewater treatise, "Length of the Day."



to another of truth. And what a body would that be, which should never, by any want or infirmity, detain or hinder such a mind, but rather serve as its auxiliary, aiding and upholding in its ceaseless investigations, in place of requiring it to halt for the recruiting of the flesh.

It is such a change, such an advancement, in our condition, which appears indicated by there being no night in heaven. There is no night there, because there we shall need no periods of inactivity: we shall never be sensible of fatigue, and never either wish or want repose. It shall not be as now, when we must stop in the pursuit of what we long for, or become incapable of pursuit, and in the enjoyment of what we love, or become incapable of enjoyment. Never tired by performing God's will, never wearied by celebrating his praises, we shall feel always the freshness of the morning, always as at the beginning of a day, and yet be always as far off as ever from its close. It is given as one characteristic of Deity, that he never slumbers nor sleeps. It is affirmed moreover of the four living creatures which are round about the throne, that they "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." So that it is a perfection to need no sleep: it is to be like the very highest of created intelligences; nay, it is to be like the very Creator himself. And, therefore, I read the promise of a splendid exaltation, of an inconceivable enlargement of every faculty and capacity, in the announcement of the absence of night. This my mind, which is now speedily overtaken, which is jaded by every increase of knowledge, which breaks down, as it were, if urged beyond a certain point, shall never be obliged to withdraw from the contemplation of the august wonders of heaven. This my body, whose wants unavoidably engage much of my attention, whose weaknesses incapacitate me from continuous application, which is little better than a drag upon the spirit when it would soar towards the dwelling-place of God, shall have organs and senses for aiding the soul in her incessant inquiries, powers which shall never flag, but seem perpetually invigorated through being perpetually

employed. How glorious then the promise of advancement, contained in the promise of there being no night in heaven. All feebleness, all remains and traces of imperfection, for ever removed, the saints shall spring to a surprising height amongst orders of creation, fitted not only in their intellectual part, but even in their material, to serve God without a pause, and to enjoy whilst they serve him.

And though it be true that night now discloses to us the wonders of the universe, so that to take from us night were to take a revelation of the magnificence of creation, whence comes this but from the imperfection of faculties—faculties which only enable us to discern certain bodies, and under certain circumstances, and which probably suffer far more to escape them than they bring to our notice? We speak of the powers of vision, and very amazing they are, giving us a kind of empire over a vast panorama, so that we gather in its beauties, and compel them, as though by enchantment, to paint themselves in miniature through the tiny lenses of the eye. But nevertheless how feeble are these powers! bodies of less than a certain magnitude altogether escape them; the microscope must be called in, though this only carries the empire one or two degrees lower: whilst other bodies, aerial for example, or those which move with extraordinary velocity, are either invisible, or only partially discerned. And is it not on account of this feebleness of power, that the eye asks the shadows of night before it can survey the majestic troop of stars? That troop is on its everlasting march, as well whilst the sun is high on the firmament, as when he has gone down amid the clouds of the west; and it is only because the eye has not strength to discern the less brilliant bodies, in the presence of the great luminary of the heavens, that it must wait for darkness to disclose to it the peopled scenes of immensity.

I glory then once more in the predicted absence of night. Be it so, that night is now our choice instructor, and that a world of perpetual sunshine would be a world of gross ignorance: I feel that night is to cease, because we shall no longer need to be taught

through a veil, because we shall be able to read the universe illuminated, and not require as now to have it darkened for our gaze. It is like telling me of a surprising increase of power; I shall not need night as a season of repose, I shall not need night as a medium of instruction. I shall be adapted in every faculty to an everlasting day, a day whose lustres shall not obscure the palest star, and yet shall paint the smallest flower; and throughout whose unbroken shining, creation will continually present me with fresh wonders, and find me always prepared to inspect them.

And if from considering night in its more literal, we pass to the considering it in its metaphorical sense, who can fail to be struck with the beauty and fulness of the promise of our text? We are accustomed to take night as the image of ignorance, of perplexity, of sorrow. And to affirm the absence of night from the heavenly state may justly be regarded as the affirming the absence of all which darkness is used to represent. "There shall be no night there," the ways of providence shall be made clear; the mysteries of grace shall be unfolded; the "things hard to be understood" shall be explained; we shall discover order in what has seemed intricate, wisdom in what we have thought unaccountable, and good where we have seen only injury. "There shall be no night there:" children of affliction, hear ye this: pain cannot exist in the atmosphere of heaven, no tears are shed there, no graves opened, no friends removed; and never, for a lonely moment, does even a flitting cloud shadow the deep rapture of tranquillity. "There shall be no night there:" children of calamity, hear ye this: no baffled plans there, no frustrated hopes, no sudden disappointments; but one rich tide of happiness shall roll through eternity, and deepen as it rolls. "There shall be no night there:" ye who are struggling with a corrupt nature, hear ye this: the night is the season of crime; it throws its mantle over a thousand enormities which shun the face of day. And to say that "there shall be no night," is to proclaim the reign of universal purity: no temptation there, no sinful desires to resist, no evil heart to battle with; but holi-

ness shall have become the very nature of the glorified inhabitants, and the very element in which they move. Oh, this mortal must have put on immortality, and this corruptible incorruption, ere we can know all the meaning and richness of the description which makes heaven a place without night. But even now we can ascertain enough to assure us, that the description keeps pace with all that even imagination can sketch of the nobility and felicity of the inheritance of the saints. I behold man made equal with the angels, no longer the dwarfish thing which, at the best, he is, whilst confined to this narrow stage, but grown into mighty stature, so that he moves amid the highest, with capacities as vast and energies as unabating. I behold the page of universal truth spread before him, no obscurity on a single line, and the brightness not dazzling the vision. I behold the removal of all mistake, of all misconception: conjectures have given place to certainties; controversies are ended, difficulties are solved, prophecies are completed, parables are interpreted. I behold the hushing up of every grief, the wiping away every tear, the prevention of every sorrow, the communication of every joy. I behold the final banishment of whatsoever has alliance with sinfulness, the splendid re-impresment of every feature of the divine image upon man, the unlimited diffusion of righteousness, the triumphant admission of the fallen into all the purities of God's presence, and their unassailable security against fresh apostacy. I behold all this in the picture of a world without night: and I feel as though I did not need the wall of sapphire, and the gate of pearl, with which the evangelist has decked the New Jerusalem; I long for that city, and I know that it must be ineffably beautiful, inconceivably desirable, when I have heard him simply assert, "And there shall be no night there."

We go on to observe that St. John is not content with affirming the absence of night: he proceeds to assert the absence of those means or instruments, to which we are here indebted for the scattering of darkness. Had he confined himself to saying that there would be no night in heaven, you might have understood him to mean that the



sun will never set in heaven; or that if it did, there would be so rich an artificial illumination as would prevent its radiance being missed. But there is to be no sun: neither is the want of the sun to be supplied as now by the lamp or the torch. "They need no candle, neither light of the sun." And what then is to make their perpetual day? We must turn to the second division of our subject; we must consider what there is in heaven, that we may gather the lessons taught by what there is not. "For the Lord God giveth them light." We wish you to observe the peculiarity of the expression, "they need no candle, neither light of the sun." The candle and sun are removed, only because no longer required. And then a reason is subjoined why the inhabitants of heaven have no further use for the candle or the sun, "for the Lord God giveth them light." They have light in the next world as well as in this; but there is a great difference in the mode or channel of communication; they obtain it there immediately, or directly, from God, whereas here it comes through certain agencies or instruments which God is pleased to appoint and employ. And if you understand light as here used metaphorically, a natural thing being put for a mental or spiritual, you will see at once that this removal of the sun and candle, and this substitution of God himself as the source of illumination, indicates an amazing change in the mode of acquiring knowledge. In another verse of the description of the New Jerusalem, you have the assertion of a similar absence, and of a similar substitution. "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." There is to be no need hereafter of those ordinances, those ministrations, those sacraments, through which, as channels, God is here pleased to communicate grace: the saints shall be privileged with direct and open intercourse: they shall be environed with manifestations of Deity; these shall be their sanctuary; and having thus access to God and the Lamb, they will no longer require the rites and institutions of an earthly dispensation. We suppose this to be what is indicated by the fact that God will

be the temple of the heavenly city, though the fact itself far exceeds our comprehension. A temple, builded of Godhead, its walls his attributes, its roof his majesty, its gates his eternity! And to worship in this temple, to live in this temple, to worship God in God! there is a wonderfulness here which is not to be overtaken by all our strivings; for who can imagine to himself the everlasting Creator condescending to become as a sanctuary to the children of men, the gorgeous cathedral into whose recesses they may penetrate, and at whose altars they may do homage? We can feel, O God, that the universe is thy temple; we are overwhelmed by the thought, that thou thyself wilt be the temple of the universe!

And we suppose that just the same truth is again indicated by St. Paul, when, in writing to the Corinthians, he draws a contrast between our present and our future state of being. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." We refer especially to the first part of this contrast, in which the comparison lies between the modes in which knowledge is to be acquired. He affirms that, in this world, we see only "through a glass, darkly," or, as it is in the original, in a riddle or enigma. We behold nothing but the image of God, as reflected from his works or dealings, which serve as so many glasses or mirrors. But hereafter we are to behold God "face to face;" not, that is, by reflected rays, but by direct; not as in a mirror, but by open vision, standing in his presence, and gazing, as it were, on his countenance. And it must be the drift of these various representations, that we are hereafter to be admitted into such communion or intercourse, that there will be no need of any of those intermediate appointments through which we are now brought into acquaintance with God. The whole apparatus of mirror, and temple, and sun, will be taken away, because we shall be admitted to the beatific vision, to all those immediate manifestations of Deity which are vouchsafed to the angel or the archangel. We know not what these may be. We will not even dare to conjec-

ture what it is to behold God "face to face;" for we remember that there must always be an untravelled separation between the infinite Being and all finite: and we may not therefore doubt, that, even in the most intimate revelation of himself, God majestically hides the wonders of his nature. Yet we may be sure that discoveries are vouchsafed in heavenly places, which throw into the shade the richest that can be obtained upon earth; and that, whatever the degree or sense in which a created intelligence can look upon the uncreated, in that it will be permitted to us to behold "the King immortal, invisible."

And this marks a sublime, though an inconceivable change in our powers and privileges. I am wonderfully struck by this abstraction of the material sun from our firmament, and this making God himself the immediate source of our light, though I can hardly give consistency or shape to the struggling thoughts which the imagery excites. Imagine, but you cannot imagine; and what is language to do when even imagination is at fault? yet make an effort; think of the sudden quenching of that luminary which now daily "cometh forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race;" but this extinction of the sun not followed by darkness, but by irradiations such as have never yet fallen on this earth. It is a glorious thing now, when the golden beams of day flood the canopy of heaven, and forest, and mountain, and river, are beautiful with light. Glorious is it, yea, and very demonstrative of Deity, when the whole creation wakes up at the summons of the morning, as though the trumpet had sounded, and the vast grave of night were giving back the cities and the solitudes which had gone down into its recesses. But now we are to have no sun; the hand of the Almighty hath quenched it; and nevertheless we are not encompassed with the shadows of the evening, but, on the contrary, dazzled with a radiance immeasurably surpassing that of the noontide. In place of a firmament, lit up by the shinings of a material body, we have the infinite vault converted into one brilliant manifestation of Godhead; the splendid coruscations of

righteousness, and truth, and justice, and loving-kindness, weaving themselves together to form the arch; and the burning brightness of Him who cannot "look on iniquity," glancing to and fro like the lightning, though not to scathe, but only to illuminate. What think you of living beneath such a canopy? What think you of having divinity, in all the blaze of his attributes, thus glowing throughout immeasurable space, and pouring his own lustre on every object in creation, so that the universe would be nothing but the one shining forth of Godhead; and each star, each leaf, each water-drop, be but as a spark from those eyes which, St. John saith, "were as a flame of fire?" O Persian, thy superstition has become truth; we are not idolaters, and yet may now worship the sun.

And though this is but treating our text, as if the change which it indicates were to be literally understood, it may help us to the forming some idea of what is intended, when light is taken metaphorically, as here put for knowledge. The change appears to mark, as we have already intimated, the removal of all that instrumentality which has been constructed and employed for the bringing us into some degree of acquaintance with God, as though we had grown into manhood, and could dispense with the processes and restraints of our early education. At present we cannot see God: we can only study his works and ways, and gather from them inadequate notions of his character and attributes. But hereafter, so strengthened will be our faculties, so enlarged our capacities, and so exalted our place amongst orders of creation, that God will be visible to us in such sense as he is visible to any finite beings; not in dim shadow, and mystic type, and material representation, but in the splendor, the spirituality, the immenseness, the eternity of Deity. We shall enter the presence-chamber of Godhead—for a presence-chamber unquestionably there is, some scene in which He who is every where, whom "the heaven of heavens cannot contain," the inhabitant of all space as of all time, unveils his stupendousness, and shows himself "as he is" to the glorious throng of worshipping spirits. In this throng we shall



have place; in this presence-chamber we shall be privileged to stand. And who can fail to perceive that there is hereby indicated an amazing change as to the mode of acquiring knowledge? I am no longer to be taught through any intermediate agency. I am no longer to be taught through laborious processes of study and research. I am to behold God, so far as the Creator can be beheld by a creature. I am to learn from actual inspection, the mind having the powers of the eye, so that the understanding shall gather in the magnificence of truth, with the same facility as the organ of sense the beauties of a landscape. There will be no distance between ourselves and the objects of contemplation, no turning away of the mind from what is worthy its attention; but so strong will be our propensity to truth, and so immediate our perceptions, that we shall be always gazing on some one of its mighty developments, and be no more liable to mistake or misapprehension than the man whose eye is his informant, and who has to believe only what he beholds.

"They need no candle." Creation, with all thy bright wonders, I ask no longer the torch with which thou hast furnished me in my searchings after God: God himself is before me; and what further need can I have of thine aids? Ordinances of grace, at which I have here trimmed the lamp of faith, ye are no longer requisite; faith itself is lost in vision, and I want not the instrumentality through which it was kept burning. Even the mediatorial office, through which is now derived whatever most tends to illuminate the understanding and warm the heart, will no longer be needed: Christ, who is emphatically "the Sun of righteousness," is to "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father;" its designs being all completed, its ends all answered; for when we stand face to face with God, what further use will there be for those channels through which we have now to seek access?

"They need no candle," nay, they need not even "the light of the sun." "The Lord God giveth them light;" is not this to say that the Lord God giveth them himself? for you will remember what is affirmed by St. John, "This

then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." And therefore God, in some ineffable way, is to communicate himself to the soul. There will probably be a communication of ideas:\* God will substitute his ideas, great, noble, luminous, for our own, contracted, confused, obscure; and we shall become like him, in our measure, though participating his knowledge. There will be a communication of excellences: God will so vividly impress his image upon us, that we shall be holy even as he is holy. There will be a communication of happiness: God will cause us to be happy in the very way in which he is happy himself, making what constitutes his felicity to constitute ours, so that we shall be like him in the sources or springs of enjoyment. All this seems included in the saying that the Lord God is to give us light. And though we feel that we are but laboring to describe, by all this accumulation of expression, what must be experienced before it can be understood, we may yet hope that you have caught something of the grandeur of the thought, that God himself is to be to us hereafter what the sun in the firmament is to us here. We wish you to give, if possible, something of definiteness to the thought, by observing what an enlargement it supposes of all the powers of our nature; for now it would consume us to be brought into intimate intercourse with God; we must have the sun, we must have the candle; our faculties are not adapted to the living in his presence, where there is no veil upon his lustres. Hence we have in the figurative sketch of our text, in the part which makes God the source of all illumination, as well as in that which asserts the absence of night, a representation of man as nobly elevated amongst orders of being, and of the sublimest knowledge as thrown open to his search. Man is elevated; for he has passed from the ordinances and institutions of an introductory state, to the open vision and free communion of spirits who never sullied their immortality. The sublimest knowledge is made accessible; for with God

\* Saurin.

for his sun, into what depths can he penetrate, and not find fresh truths? with God as his temple, along what aisle of the stupendous edifice can he pass, and not collect from every column, and every arch, majestic discoveries? where can he stand, and not hear the pervading spirit of the sanctuary breathing out secrets which he had vainly striven to explore, and wonders which he had not dared to conjecture? And thus, if it be a blessed thing to know that hereafter, set free from all the trainings of an elementary dispensation, we shall take our place, in the beauty and might of our manhood, amongst the nobles of creation; that, gifted with capacities, and privileged with opportunities, for deriving from immediate contact with Deity acquaintance with all that is illustrious in the universe, we shall no longer need those means and agencies, whether of nature or grace, which, whilst they strengthen and inform, prove us not made perfect—yea, if it be a blessed thing to know this, it is also a blessed thing to hear that there shall be no candle, no sun, in the heavenly Jerusalem. The substitution of God himself for every present source of light, is among the most energetic representations of a change, which lifts man into dignity, and gives the heights and depths to his survey; and I feel therefore, that, so far as the ripening of our powers is concerned, or the moral splendor of our heritage, or the freedom of our expatiations, description has well nigh exhausted itself in the announcement of the Evangelist, that the inhabitants of the new Jerusalem "need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."

We would observe to you here, though we have partly anticipated the statement, that the expression, "the Lord God giveth them light," seems to indicate that our future state, like our present, will be progressive: there is to be a continued communication of light, or of knowledge, so that the assertion of Solomon, "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," may be as true hereafter as here. This might be gathered from what has been advanced under our first head of discourse, but it deserves to be more ex-

PLICITLY asserted. Whatever may be the attainments of the just man whilst on earth, he sees only, according to the words already quoted, "through a glass, darkly." How much of what he acknowledges as truth is profoundly mysterious! what difficulties through great portions of Scripture! how dark the dispensations of Providence! what subject for implicit faith in the workings of God's moral government! With St. Paul he is often forced to exclaim, when musing on the Almighty and his dealings, "how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." But he has yet to pass into a scene of greater light, and to read, in the opened volume of God's purposes, the explanation of difficulties, the wisdom of appointments, the nice proportions of truth. And assuredly do we believe that then shall there break on him mighty and ever-amplifying views of all that is august in the nature of God, and wonderful in his works. Then shall the divine attributes rise before him, unsearchable indeed and unlimited, but ever discovering more of their stupendousness, their beauty, their harmony. Then shall the mystic figures of prophecy, which here have crossed his path only as the shadows of far-off events, take each its place in accomplished plans, schemed and will-ed by the everlasting mind. Then shall redemption throw open before him its untravelled amplitude, and allow of his tracing those unnumbered ramifications which the cross, erected on this globe, may possibly be sending to all the outskirts of immensity. Then shall the several occurrences of his life, the dark things and the bright which chequered his path, appear equally necessary, equally merciful; and doubt give place to adoring reverence, as the problem is cleared up of oppressed righteousness and successful villany. But it shall not be instantaneous, this reaping down the vast harvest of knowledge, this ingathering of what we may call the sheaves of light, seeing that "light," according to the Psalmist, "is sown for the righteous." It must continue whilst being continued: for if the mysteries of time were exhausted, and redemption presented no unexplored district, God would remain infinite as at the first, as sublime in his



inscrutableness as though ages had not been given to the searching out his wonders. It is said by St. Paul of the love of Christ, and, if of the love, then necessarily also of him whose love it is, that it "passeth knowledge." But if never to be overtaken, it shall always be pursued; and we gather from the expression of our text, an expression which clearly marks progressiveness, that the just man will continually be admitted to richer and richer discoveries of God and of Christ, so that eternity will be spent in journeying through that temple, which we have already described as the Almighty himself, from whose innermost shrine, though always inapproachable, shall flash, as he advances, the deeper and deeper effulgence of Deity. Ay, and if knowledge be thus progressive, so also shall love be, and so also happiness. In giving light, the sun gives also heat. It cannot be that the just man should thus travel into the perfections of his Creator and Redeemer, and not admire more, and adore more, and bound with a greater ecstasy. As fast as obscure things are illuminated, and difficult made intelligible, and contradictory reconciled, and magnificent unfolded, there will be a fresh falling down before the throne, a fresh ascription of praise, a fresh burst of rapture. The voice which is to be from the first "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder," shall grow louder and louder—each manifestation of Deity adding a new wave to the many waters, a new peal to the great thunder. The anthem which is to ascribe worthiness for ever and ever to the Lamb, though always rushing as a torrent of melody, seeing that it is to issue from "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands:"—what an orchestra! who would not hear, who would not swell the roll of this music?—shall not be always of equal strength; for as the Lamb discloses to his church more and more of his amazing achievement, and opens new tracts of the consequences of the atonement, and exhibits, under more endearing and overcoming aspects, the love which moved him, and the sorrows which beset him, and the triumphs which attended him; we believe that the hearts of the redeemed will beat with a higher pulse of devo-

tion, and their harps be swept with a bolder hand, and their tongues send forth a mightier chorus. Thus will the just proceed from strength to strength; knowledge, and love, and holiness, and joy, being always on the increase; and eternity one glorious morning, with the sun ever climbing higher and higher; one blessed spring-time, and yet rich summer, every plant in full flower, but every flower the bud of a lover.

Ah, my brethren, you will tell us that we are but "darkening counsel by the multitude of words;" that we are in fact only reiterating the same statements; and that, in place of describing heaven, we still leave it to be described. We plead guilty to the charge: in our eagerness to convey to you some idea of heaven, it is likely that we have fallen into repetitions; and we have too lofty thoughts of the future to suppose for an instant that our descriptions could be adequate. But pause for a moment: our great object in attempting description is to animate you to the seeking possession: admit then that description is at fault, and we may yet urge you by the indescribability of heaven. Yes, by the indescribability of heaven. What had St. Paul to say, when he returned from the third heaven, into which he had been mysteriously translated? Nothing, absolutely nothing: "he heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful, or not possible, for a man to utter." And are you disappointed that the great Apostle has nothing to communicate? He gives you the most animating description, in assuring you that heaven is not to be described. It would be but a poor heaven which such beings as ourselves could comprehend or anticipate. Give me the majestic cloud, the oracular veil, the mighty shadows which recede as we advance, filling the mind with amazement, but forbidding us to approach and examine what they are. I wish to be defeated in every effort to understand futurity. I wish, when I have climbed to the highest pinnacle to which thought can soar, to be compelled to confess that I have not yet reached the base of the everlasting hills. There is something surpassingly glorious in this baffling of the imagination. It is vain that I task myself to

conceive of heaven, but it is a noble truth that it is vain. That heaven is inconceivable, is the most august, the most elevating discovery. It tells me that I have not yet the power for enjoying heaven: but this is only to tell me, that the beholding God "face to face," the being "for ever with the Lord," requires the exaltation of my nature; and I triumph in the assurance that what is reserved for me, presupposes my vast advancement in the scale of creation. If we would have sublime notions of a glorified man, of the station which he occupies, of the faculties which he possesses, they must be the notions which are gained by ineffectual efforts to represent and delineate: the splendor which dazzles so that we cannot look, the immenseness which we cannot grasp, the energies for which there are no terms in human speech, these give our best images of heaven. If I dare rate one portion of Scripture above another, I prefer the record of the vision of St. Paul to that of the visions of St. John. Wonderful indeed were the manifestations vouchsafed to the exile in Patmos. The spirit of the coldest must glow as the beloved disciple delineates what he saw, the tree of life, the crystal river, the white-robed multitude, the glittering city. But the attempt to describe seems to assume the possibility of description: and to prove to me that heaven might be described, would be to prove to me that its glory was not transcendent, its felicity not unbounded. And therefore I am more moved by the silence of St. Paul than by the poetry of St. John. The truth is, that St. Paul was more favored than St. John. St. John remained on earth: he was not caught up into paradise: and the gorgeous trains which swept by him in his ecstasy or trance, were so constructed and clothed as to be adapted to a human comprehension. But St. Paul saw the reality of heaven, not in figure, not in type, but heaven as it actually is, heaven as it will appear to the righteous, when admitted to behold "the King in his beauty." And hence it is not strange that St. Paul must be silent, though St. John had marvel upon marvel to relate. I turn from the one to the other: and though fascinated by the spectacle of a city whose "foun-

dations were garnished with all manner of precious stones," where pain never enters, and whose temple is the Lord God Almighty, I learn more, and I grow more hopeful, and I am more thronged by the glories of the future, when I find St. Paul declaring that he had heard unspeakable words. "The things which God hath prepared for them that love him," are things which the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the human heart conceived: but faith and hope may both be strengthened by this very impossibility of our forming just ideas of heaven: it is the loftiness of the mountain which causes it to be lost in the clouds: we may therefore animate ourselves by the thought, that thought itself cannot measure our everlasting portion, and be all the more cheered when we find that even description gives no distinct picture, but that we plunge into darkness when striving to penetrate all the meaning of the sayings, "There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."

But there is yet a clause of the text to which we have given no attention, though it suggests as noble thoughts as any of the preceding, in reference to our everlasting state. "And they shall reign for ever and ever"—"they shall be kings for ever and ever." Wonderful assertion! wonderful, because made of beings apparently insignificant, beings of whom the Psalmist, after surveying the magnificence of the heavens, was forced to exclaim, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Yes, of us, who are by nature "children of wrath," of us, who are "born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," even of us is it said, "They shall be kings for ever and ever." And you are aware that this is not a solitary expression, but that the ascription of regal power to the saints is common in Scripture, and especially in the book of Revelation. Our Lord himself promised to his apostles, that, "in the regeneration" they should "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "If we suffer with him," exclaims St. Paul, in reference to the Redeemer, "we shall also reign with him." St. John ascribes glory and do-



minion "unto Him that loved us, and washed as from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." And the famous prophecy of the first resurrection will naturally occur to you, in which it is declared of the witnesses for the Mediator, that "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Undoubtedly this last prediction, however interpreted, must have reference to the period of the millennium, during which Christ is to take visibly on himself the sovereignty of the earth, having erected his throne on the wreck of all human empire. What offices the saints are to have throughout this millennial reign we pretend not to conjecture, much less to decide. Suffice it that they are evidently to participate the triumph of their Lord, and perhaps to have sway under him, one over ten cities, another over five, according to the number and improvement of their talents. But it is not to the millennium that our text refers; we have already said that it relates to what will succeed the general judgment, and, therefore, to that condition of the redeemed which will be final and permanent.

And on what thrones shall we sit in heaven? over whom shall we be invested with dominion? Let it be remembered that the mediatorial kingdom will have terminated. The Son himself having become "subject to Him that put all things under Him." We cannot therefore retain any such sway as the saints may be supposed to have possessed throughout the millennium: the whole economy will be changed; God himself will be "all in all;" and the affairs of the universe will no longer be transacted through Christ in his glorified humanity. And, nevertheless, "they shall reign, they shall be kings, for ever and ever." They shall reign, whilst they serve God; they shall be kings, whilst they are subjects. We know not whether this may be intended to denote that the saints shall have authority, or principality, over other orders of being. It may be so. I have the highest possible thoughts in regard of the future dignity of man. I believe not that he will be second to any but God. I would not change his place, I would not bar-

ter his crown, for that of the noblest, the first, amongst the angels of heaven. For no nature has been brought into so intimate a relation to the divine as the human: God has become man, and man therefore, we believe, must stand nearest to God. It may then be, seeing that, beyond question, there will be order through eternity, a gradation of ranks, a distribution of authority, that the saints will be as princes in the kingdom of God; that through them will the Almighty be pleased to carry on much of his government; and that angels, who are "ministering spirits" to them during their moments of probation, will attend them as their messengers during their ages of triumph. "Know ye not," asks St. Paul of the Corinthians, "that we shall judge angels?" and if we are to sit in assize on the evil angels, it may be that we shall be invested with royalty over the good.

But let this pass: if not over angels, I can yet see much over which, if I gain entrance into heaven, I shall "reign for ever and ever." I connect the different parts of the verse; and I read in its last clause, only differently expressed, the same promise, or prophecy, which I find in all the rest. I shall reign over the secrets of nature: all the workmanship of God shall be subject to me, opening to me its recesses, and admitting me into its marvels. I shall reign over the secrets of Providence; my empire shall gather back the past, and anticipate the future; and all the dealings of my Maker shall range themselves in perfect harmony before my view. I shall reign over the secrets of grace; the mediatorial work shall be as a province subject to my rule, containing no spot in all its spreadings which I may not explore. I shall reign over myself: I shall be thorough master of myself: no unruly desires, no undisciplined affections: I shall not be, what an earthly king often is, his own base slave: no war between the flesh and the spirit, no rebellion of the will, no struggle of corrupt inclinations; but with all that true royalty, the royalty of perfect holiness, I shall serve God without wavering, and find his service to be sovereignty.

Glorious empire! what can animate us, if a prospect such as this move us

not to the "laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us?" Nevertheless, let us see to it that we do not conclude ourselves on the high road to the celestial city, just because we have some tastes and feelings to which we expect to find there the counterpart objects. We must warn you against mistaking an intellectual for a spiritual longing, the wish to enter heaven because there "we shall know even as we are known," for the wish to enter it because God himself will there be "all in all." I am sure that many a man, in whose heart is no love of the Creator and Redeemer, might pant for a state in which he shall no longer see darkly through a glass, but have full sway over universal truth. The mind may struggle for emancipation, and crave a broader field, whilst the soul is the bondsman of Satan, and has no wish to throw away her chains. Ay, it is just as easy to dress up an intellectual paradise as a carnal, and to desire the one, as well as the other, without acquiring any meetness "for the inheritance of the saints in light." The heaven of the mohammedan is full of all that can gratify the senses, and pamper the appetites. The heaven of the philosopher may be a scene in which mind is to reach all its vigor, and science all its majesty. But neither is the heaven of the christian. The heaven for which the christian longs, is the place in which God himself shall be his "strength, and his portion for ever." The knowledge, whose increase he ardently wishes, is knowledge of him who made him, and of him who redeemed him: for already hath he felt that "this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He may indeed exult in the thought that hard things are to be explained, and dark illuminated; but only that he may find fresh cause for praising, admiring, and adoring God. He may rejoice in the assurance that a flood of splendid light will be poured alike over creation and redemption: but his great motive to exultation is, that he can say with David to his God, "in thy light shall we see light," so that the irradiation will be from Deity, and that which makes visible be that upon which all his affections are fastened. And you are to try yourselves

by this test. You are to ask yourselves whether you desire heaven because God is there, because Christ is there; whether, in short, God and Christ would be to you heaven, if there were none but these to be beheld, none but these to be enjoyed. Unless you can answer such questions in the affirmative, you may be longing for heaven, because it is a place of repose, because departed kinsfolk are there, or because man shall there be loftily endowed; but you have none of that desire which proves a title to possession. We do not say that such reasons are to have no weight: our discourse has been mainly occupied on the setting them forth. But they are to be only secondary and subordinate: they are not to be uppermost: our prime idea of heaven should be, that it is the place where God dwells, and of its happiness, that God is "all in all."

But having delivered these cautions, we may again exclaim, Glorious empire, which is promised us by God! We said, in the commencement of our discourse, that we would utter no reproaches, no threatenings, but would dwell exclusively on the hopes and privileges of christians. And we are not now about to break this resolution: unless indeed it be to break it, to express great wonder, and bitter regret, that, when men might be heirs of a world in which there is no night, of which the Lord God himself is the sun, and where there are to be glorious thrones for those faithful unto death, they give their time and thought to the acquiring some perishable good, and live, for the most part, as though they had never heard of judgment and eternity. On other occasions, we often strive to move the careless amongst you by "the terrors of the Lord;" we warn them, by falling stars, and a moon "turned into blood," and a sun "black as sackcloth of hair," that they persist not in unrighteousness. And even now we gather our incentives from a stripped firmament and extinguished luminaries. We still preach to the worldly-minded through planets which have started from their courses, and a sun which has ceased to give light. And, nevertheless, it is not by a darkened, it is by a brilliantly irradiated sky, that we summon them to repentance. The



bright world of which we have spoken, it may be yours. It hath been thrown open to you by that "High Priest of our profession," who entered "by his own blood," and took possession for himself and his followers. There is not one of us who may not, if he will, secure himself a throne in this everlasting kingdom. "Yet there is room." Myriads have pressed in, myriads are pressing in, but "yet there is room." Alas,

what account will have to be given at the judgment, if any of us be doomed to outer darkness, in place of passing into a world where there shall be no night? What but that we wilfully closed our eyes against "the light of the glorious Gospel," not wishing to be made aware of our danger and corruption? what but that "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil?"

## SERMON XII.

### GOD'S WAY IN THE SANCTUARY.

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?"—Psalm 77 : 13.

It may be doubtful whether, in speaking of God's way as "in the sanctuary," the Psalmist designed to express more than that God's way is "in holiness." We mean that it does not seem certain from the original, that he intended to make any such reference to the Jewish temple, to the holy place, or the holy of holies, as you observe in our translation. Bishop Horsley's version is, "O God, in holiness is thy way: what God is great like our God?" There does not however appear to be any positive objection against the common rendering. In the 63d Psalm, composed whilst David was in the wilderness, and therefore excluded from the public ordinances of religion, you find the words, "my soul thirsteth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Here it seems almost required, by the circumstances under which the psalm appears to have been written, that we should adopt the translation, "in the sanctuary." At least, there is an appositeness in this translation which there is not in any other; for the Psalmist

was undoubtedly longing for those religious privileges from which he was debarred, privileges only to be enjoyed in the temple, or tabernacle, at Jerusalem, and of which he had there often and thankfully partaken. But the original is the same as in our text: we may suppose, therefore, that our translators were not without warrant when they represented the psalmist as saying, "Thy way is in the sanctuary," and not "Thy way is in holiness."

We own that we should be sorry to have to give up the common translation, and adopt the other which we have mentioned. There are, we think, trains of very interesting and instructive thought opened by the statement that God's way is "in the sanctuary," along which we should not be led by considering only that God's way is "in holiness." At the same time it should be observed that whatever truth is presented by the latter version is included in the former, so that we can run no risk of missing the meaning of the passage by adopting the more ample rendering. We wish you further to re-

mark, that the triumphant question with which our text concludes, is undoubtedly suggested, or warranted, by the previous statement in regard of God's way. The fact that God's way is "in the sanctuary," or "in holiness," forms evidently the argument for that greatness of God, that superiority of Jehovah to every false deity, which the consequent challenge so holdly asserts. And without at all questioning that the fact of God's way being "in holiness" would well bear out the challenge, we shall perhaps see, in the sequel, that yet stronger proofs of greatness are furnished by the fact of his way being "in the sanctuary:" if so, these reasons will themselves go to the vindicating the version which we are anxious to retain.

Now it would not have been right that we should have proceeded at once to discourse to you on the common translation, without premising these few critical remarks. It is very easy to lay a stress on passages of Scripture, or to assign them a meaning, which, at first sight, may seem just, but which, on closer examination, they will be found not to bear. And he who may endeavor to interpret the Bible is required to be very honest, frankly avowing the objections which may lie against his statements; and wheresoever there may be doubt as to the precise sense of the author, not presuming to speak with any thing like certainty. We have therefore candidly shown you that there is variety of opinion as to whether there be any reference in our text to the sanctuary or temple. But we have also shown you grounds on which we seem warranted in assuming that there is such a reference: and we may now proceed to discourse on this assumption, without fear of being charged with attaching undue weight to a doubtful expression.

Now the psalm, in which our text occurs, describes great alternations of mind, the author appearing at one time almost in despair, and then again gathering confidence from the attributes of God. Beset with difficulties and dangers, he was tempted to think himself abandoned by God, so that he pathetically exclaims, "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favorable no more?" He soon however rejects with

abhorrence a thought so dishonoring to God, and ascribes his entertaining it to spiritual weakness and disease. "And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." He calls to mind what deliverances God had wrought for his people, and concludes that they were pledges of future assistance. "I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old." And hence he is encouraged: he feels that God's ways may be mysterious, but that they must be good; and that it was therefore as much his privilege as his duty to "wait patiently" upon him. This appears to be the feeling which he expresses in our text: he has taken the retrospect of God's dealings, and now announces in one sentence their general character, a character which displays the surpassing greatness of their author. There is no reason, then, why we should make a confined application of our text: we learn, from examining the context, that the works and wonders of the Lord suggest to the Psalmist his description of God's way, and we may therefore regard that description as applying in general to all the dealings of our Maker.

We have now, then, a clear subject of discourse, a general description of the ways or dealings of God, and that description furnishing evidence of God's unequalled greatness. Let it be our endeavor to establish and illustrate both the description and the evidence; in other words, let us strive to show you, in successive instances, how true it is that God's way "is in the sanctuary," and what cause there is in each for exclaiming, "Who is so great a God as our God?"

Now we would first observe that there was a peculiar force to a Jew in this reference to the sanctuary, and in the consequent challenge as to the greatness of God. Under the legal dispensation, every divine dealing was closely connected with the temple: in the temple were the manifestations of Deity, the signs and notices of mercies with which future days were charged. There, and there only, could God be solemnly worshipped; there, and there only, might expiatory sacrifices be offered; there, and there only, were in-



timations of the Divine will to be sought or obtained. In the holy of holies, on the mercy-seat, overshadowed by the wings of cherubim, dwelt the perpetual token of the presence of the invisible Creator; and the breast-plate of the high priest, glowing with mystic and oracular jewelry, gave forth, in the solitudes of the tabernacle, the messages of Jehovah. Wonderful dispensation! beneath which, in spite of all its darkness, there were burning traces of the "goings forth" of God, and in spite of its shadowy and imperfect character, there were direct and open communications with Him "that inhabiteth eternity."

But of all its wonders the temple might be declared the centre or seat; for seeing that God designed, in the fulness of time, to gather all things into his Son, and to set him forth as the alone source or channel of blessing, therefore did he make the temple, which typified that Son, the home of all his operations, the focus into which were condensed, and from which diverged, the various rays of his attributes and dealings. And this suggests to us the speaking for a few moments on a point of great importance, the consistency of the several parts of revelation. We take the Bible into our hands, and examine diligently its different sections, delivered in different ages to mankind. There is a mighty growth in the discoveries of God's nature and will, as time rolls on from creation to redemption; but as knowledge is increased, and brighter light thrown on the divine purposes and dealings, there is never the point at which we are brought to a pause by the manifest contradiction of one part to another. It is the wonderful property of the Bible, though its authorship is spread over a long line of centuries, that it never withdraws any truth once advanced, and never adds new without giving fresh force to the old. In reading the Bible, we always look, as it were, on the same landscape: the only difference being, as we take in more and more of its statements, that more and more of the mist is rolled away from the horizon, so that the eye includes a broader sweep of beauty. If we hold converse with patriarchs occupying the earth whilst yet in its infancy, and then listen to Moses as he legislates

for Israel, to prophets throwing open the future, and to apostles as they publish the mysteries of a new dispensation, we find the discourse always bearing, with more or less distinctness, on one and the same subject: the latter speakers, if we may use such illustration, turn towards us a larger portion than the former of the illuminated hemisphere; but, as the mighty globe revolves on its axis, we feel that the oceans and lands, which come successively into view, are but constituent parts of the same glorious world. There is the discovery of new territories; but, as fast as discovered, the territories combine to make up one planet. There is the announcement of new truths; but, as fast as announced, they take their places as parts of one immutable system. Indeed there is vast difference between the Epistles of St. Paul, and the Psalms of David, or the prophecies of Isaiah. But it is the difference, as we have just said, between the landscape whilst the morning mist yet rests on half its villages and lakes, and that same range of scenery when the noontide irradiates every spire and every rivulet. It is the difference between the moon, as she turns towards us only a thin crescent of her illuminated disk, and when, in the fulness of her beauty, she walks our firmament, and scatters our night. It is no new landscape which opens on our gaze, as the town and forest emerge from the shadow, and fill up the blanks in the noble panorama. It is no new planet which comes travelling in its majesty, as the crescent swells into the circle, and the faint thread of light gives place to the rich globe of silver. And it is no fresh system of religion which is made known to the dwellers in this creation, as the brief notices given to patriarchs expand in the institutions of the law, and under the breathings of prophecy, till at length, in the days of Christ and his apostles, they burst into magnificence, and fill a world with redemption. It is throughout the same system, a system for the rescue of humankind by the interference of a surety. And revelation has been nothing else but the gradual developement of this system, the drawing up another fold of the vail from the landscape, the adding another stripe of light to the

crescent, so that the early fathers of our race, and ourselves on whom "the ends of the world are come," look on the same arrangement for human deliverance, though to them there was nothing but a clouded expanse, with here and there a prominent landmark; whilst to us, though the horizon loses itself in the far-off eternity, every object of personal interest is exhibited in beauty and distinctness.

But if we may affirm this thorough consistency of the several parts of Revelation, we may speak of the Jewish temple, with all its solemnities and ceremonies, as a focus for the rays of the divine attributes and dealings; seeing that into its services must have been mystically gathered the grand truths and facts which have been successively developed, or which have yet to be disclosed. And who shall tell us the emotions with which a devout Jew must have regarded the temple, that temple towards which, if he chanced to be a wanderer in a foreign land, he was bidden to turn, whensoever he sought in prayer the God of his fathers, as though he must imagine himself canopied by its lofty architecture, before he could gain audience of his Maker? If he had sinned, he must go up to the temple, that there his guilt might be expiated by the blood of slain beasts. If he had become ceremonially defiled, he must go up to the temple, that there, through certain figurative rites, he might be restored into fellowship with God's people. If he had mercies to acknowledge, he must go up to the temple, that he might there express his gratitude in eucharistical offerings. If he needed, in some extraordinary crisis, direction from above, he must go up to the temple, that there the priest might divine for him, by the urim and thummim, the course which it was God's will that he should take. With what deep feeling, therefore, must he have confessed, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary. And would he not, moreover, as he mused on this fact, be led to the acknowledging and admiring the greatness of the Lord? We do not know, that, at any time, or under any circumstances, God has vouchsafed more striking proofs of his greatness, than whilst he governed Israel from the tabernacle as his throne. There was

something so sublime in the whole system of a theocracy; the interferences of an invisible King were so awful, because, whilst the sceptre was swayed, there was apparently no hand to hold it; the sanctities of the ark, with its symbolical riches, were so consuming and so conquering, thousands perishing through a rash glance, and idols falling prostrate; that never perhaps did the Almighty give such tokens of his supremacy, as whilst, without the intervention of any chief magistrate, he guided and ruled the twelve tribes.

And even when the affairs of the Israelites were administered in a more ordinary way—as was the case when our text was composed, there being then a king in Jerusalem—we may well speak of the greatness of God as singularly exhibited through all the ordinances of religion. It is here that we have need of what has been advanced on the consistency of revelation. How great was God in all those types and emblems which figured prophetically the mysteries of redemption. How great in arranging a complicated system, whose august ceremonies, and pompous rites, might serve the purpose of keeping a fickle people from being seduced by the splendid superstitions of the heathen; and nevertheless foreshow, in their minutest particulars, the simple, beautiful facts of a religion, whose temple was to be the whole world, and whose shrine every human heart. How great in preserving a knowledge of himself, whilst darkness, gross darkness, covered the nations; and in carrying on the promise and hope of a Messiah, through age after age of almost universal apostacy. How great in ordaining sacrifices which, in all their varieties, represented one and the same victim; in commanding observances so numerous and multiform that they can hardly be recounted, but which, in every tittle, had respect to the same deliverer; in gathering all that was distant into each day, and each hour, of an introductory dispensation, crowding the scene with a thousand different shadows, but all formed by light thrown on one and the same substance. And all these demonstrations, or exhibitions, of greatness, were furnished from the sanctuary: the temple was God's palace, if you



view him as king over Israel; and within its sacred precincts those celebrations took place, and those rites were performed, which announced a Redeemer, and in some sense anticipated his coming. Then well indeed might the Jew, who thought on God's way as "in the sanctuary," break into a confession of the greatness of God. We know not precisely the time when the psalm, in which our text occurs, was composed; whether after the building of the temple, or whilst "the ark of the covenant of the Lord remained under curtains." But suppose that Solomon had already reared his magnificent pile, it would not have been the grandeur of the house of the Lord which would have filled the devout Jew with wonder and exultation. As he gazed on the stupendous structure, it would not have been because it outdid every other in beauty and majesty, that his heart would have swelled with lofty emotions. He would have venerated the edifice, because it was as the council-chamber in which Deity arranged his plans, and the stage on which he wrought them gradually out for the benefit of the world. As he entered its courts, he would have seemed to himself to enter the very place where all those mighty affairs were being transacted, which were to terminate, in some far-off season, in the emancipation of the earth from wickedness and wretchedness. On every altar he would have seen a Redeemer already offered up: in every cloud of incense he would have marked the ascendings of acceptable prayer through a Mediator: in the blast of every trumpet he would have heard God marshalling his armies for the final overthrow of Satan. And the feeling of his soul must have been, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary." Thy way—I cannot trace it on the firmament, studded though it be with thy works. I cannot trace it on the earth, though thou art there in a thousand operations, all eloquent, and all worthy, of thyself. I search creation, but cannot find the lines of thy way, along which thou art passing to the fulfilment of thine ancient promises. But here is thy way, here in thy sanctuary. Every stone seems wrought into the pavement of that way: every altar is as a pillar

which shows its course: every sound is as the sound of thy footstep, as thou goest forward in thine awfulness. And in this, yea, in this, thou art amazing. I should have marvelled at thee less, had thine advancings towards the consummation of thy plan been audible through the universe, than now that within these walls thou hast space enough for the march of a purpose in which the universe has interest. Wonderful in that, through what goes on in this house builded with hands, thou art approximating to a glorious result, the overthrow of evil, and its extermination from thine empire—yea, more wonderful, for it more shows thee independent even on the instruments which thou dost use, than if thou hadst taken unnumbered worlds for thy scene of operation, passing in thy majesty from one to another, and causing each to be a beacon on the track of redemption. And therefore, oh, what can I do, after feeling and confessing that "thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary," but break into a challenge, a challenge to angels above, and to men below, "who is so great a God as our God?"

But we would now observe, that, by the sanctuary, we may probably understand the holy of holies: for it was in that veiled and mysterious recess that the Shekinah shone, the visible token of the Almighty's presence. However true it be that God's way was in the temple, understanding by the temple the whole structure that was set apart to sacred uses, it was yet more emphatically true that this way was in the sanctuary, understanding by the sanctuary that part within the veil, into which none but the high priest was allowed to enter, and that but once in the year, when he entered as a type of the Mediator who, having shed his blood as a sacrifice, carried it into heaven to present it as an intercessor. It may not have been altogether to the temple services, to the ceremonies and sacrifices appointed by the law, that the Psalmist referred: it may rather have been to the awfulness, the sanctity, the privacy of that spot where the Almighty might be said to have condescended to take up his abode. In saying that God's way was "in the sanctuary," he may have designed to assert the impenetrable obscurity in

which the divine proceedings were shrouded, and at the same time the inviolable holiness by which they were distinguished; and then the concluding question will indicate that this obscurity, and this holiness, were arguments or evidences of the greatness of God. And it will not be difficult to trace the connection between the several parts of our text, if you consider the sanctuary as thus put for the qualities or properties which were specially pointed out by the holy of holies. You are to remember that the sanctuary was a place into which no Israelite but the high priest might ever dare to enter, and the attempting to enter which would have been an act of the worst sacrilege, certain to be followed by instant and fearful vengeance. What concealment then was there about this sanctuary, and at the same time what purity! He who thought on the holy of holies thought on a solitude which was inaccessible to him, though close at hand: inaccessible, even as the remotest depth of infinite space, though a single step might have taken him into its midst; but, at the same time, a solitude where, as he well knew, every thing breathed holiness, every thing glowed with the lustre of that Being who is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity. And to say of God that his way was in this sanctuary, what was it but to say that God works in an impenetrable secrecy, but that, nevertheless, in that secrecy he orders every thing in righteousness? These are facts with which we ought to be familiar, and in regard of which we should strive to keep our faith firm. We may not hope to understand the dealings of the Lord: nay, we must be content not to understand them: we must not attempt to lift, with presumptuous hand, the veil which conceals the place in which they originate. It is behind that curtain, to pass which is to perish, that the Almighty arranges his purposes, and appoints means for their consummation; and though we may know something of these purposes, as they appear without the curtain in their progress towards completion, they are hidden from us in their springs, and must often therefore be quite incomprehensible.

But what of this? The sublime secrecy in which God dwells, and in

which he works, is among the signal tokens of his greatness. In nothing does the Supreme Being more demand our admiration than in those properties which caused an apostle to exclaim, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." It is a proof of his mercy towards us, and a source of vast honor to himself, that he hides himself in clouds, and throws around his goings an awful obscurity. There is something singularly noble in that saying of Solomon, in the book of Proverbs, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." It is his glory, not to make his every dealing luminous, so that his creatures might read without difficulty its design, and admit without an act of faith its excellence; but to involve his proceedings in so much of darkness, that there shall be a constant demand on the submissiveness and trust of those whom they concern. It is his glory, inasmuch as he thus takes the most effectual mode of preserving a spirit of dependence on himself, in beings who are prone to forget a first cause, and to ascribe to some second whatsoever they fancy they can trace to an origin. And very wonderful does God appear, when thus represented as seated in some inapproachable solitude, veiled from all finite intelligence, and there regulating the countless springs, and putting in motion the countless wheels which are to produce appointed results throughout immensity. It is not that he is associated with myriads of wise and ever-active beings, with whom he may consult, and by whom he may be assisted, in reference to the multitudinous transactions of every day and every moment. His way "is in the sanctuary." He is alone, majestically, omnipotently alone. The vast laboratories of nature, he presides over them himself. The operations of providence, they all originate with himself. The workings of grace, they confess his immediate authorship. My brethren, this is God in his sublimity. God in his stupendousness. Let us take heed that we attempt not to penetrate his solitudes: let it content us to worship before the veil, and to know that he is working behind it: why rashly endeavor to cross the threshold of the holy of holies, when "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing?"



And certainly it is not the obscurity which there may be round the ways of the Lord which should induce a suspicion that those ways are not righteous. If God work in a place of secrecy, we know that it is equally a place of sanctity: we can be sure, therefore, of whatsoever comes forth from that place, that, if involved in clouds, it is invested with equity. We may not be able to discover God's reasons: but we can be certain from his attributes, attributes which shine through the veil, though that veil be impenetrable, that we should approve them if discovered. And if it be an evidence of the greatness of God, that his way is hidden, we scarcely need say that it is a further evidence of this greatness, that his way is holy. That, although he have to deal with a polluted world, with creatures by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," he contracts no impurity, but keeps travelling, as it were, "in the sanctuary," even whilst moving to and fro amid those who have defiled themselves and their dwelling-place—what is this but proof that he is immeasurably separated by difference of nature, from all finite being; that he is verily "the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity," the high because the holy, and equally the holy because the high? Indeed, whilst there is every thing to comfort us, there is every thing also to give us lofty thoughts of God, in the fact that God's way "is in the sanctuary." "In the sanctuary:" I may not enter, I may not think to penetrate. But how great must be the Being who thus, withdrawn from all scrutiny, always in a solitude, though encompassed with ten thousand times ten thousand waiting spirits, orders every event, directs every agent, consummates every purpose. "In the sanctuary:" where every thing is of a purity that dazzles even the imagination, on whose emblematic furniture the eye may not look, as though a human glance would dim the lustres of its gold. How righteous must be the Being who thus hides himself in light, how just his ways, how good his appointments! Do ye not seem to enter into the feeling of the Psalmist? are ye not ready to pass with him from his confession to his challenge? Come, place yourselves by him, as he may be

supposed to meditate in the temple. He calls to mind the dealings of God. How much that is perplexing, how much that is dark, how much that is incomprehensible! Whither shall he turn for counsel and comfort? whence shall he draw material of assurance, that, notwithstanding all apparent inconsistencies, notwithstanding obscurity and intricacy, the hand of the Lord is a mighty hand, and will bring to pass whatsoever is best? His eye is on that veil which hides from his gaze the Shekinah, and the mercy-seat, and the overshadowing cherubim. What does the solitude, with its burning and beautiful wonders, represent? what means this inaccessible spot, tenanted by Deity, but forbidden to man? Ah, wherefore indeed doth God thus shrine himself in the holy of holies, unless to teach us that we cannot look upon him in his actings, but that, nevertheless, those actings, though necessarily inscrutable, partake the sanctity as well as the secrecy of his dwelling? This thought may be supposed to occupy the Psalmist. It strengthens, it animates him; it should strengthen, it should animate you. The veil, whilst it hides, reveals Deity: nay, it reveals by hiding: it teaches the sublimity of God, inapproachable; his independence, none with him in his workings; and yet his righteousness, for it is the awful purity of the place which warns back all intruders. Then there is enough to make us both discover, and rejoice in, the supremacy of our God. With a tongue of fear, for we are almost staggered by the mysteriousness of his workings, we will confess, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary:" but with a tongue of triumph, for his very concealments are tokens of his Almightyness, we will give utterance to the challenge, "Who is so great a God as our God?"

But there can be no reason why we should confine the illustrations of our text to the Jewish temple and dispensation. We may bring down the verse to our own day, understand by the sanctuary our own churches, and still found on the confession in the first clause the challenge which is uttered in the second. You must all be prepared to admit, that, under the christian, even as it was under the legal, dispen-

sation, God specially works by and through the public ordinances of religion, in converting sinners and bringing them into acquaintance with himself. Perhaps indeed you may think that it could not have been to such workings as these that the Psalmist referred, when he spake of God's way as "in the sanctuary," and that we are not therefore warranted in making that use of his words which we are now about to make. But we believe that this is altogether an error, and that the Psalmist may justly be considered as speaking of the sanctuary, even as we now speak of a church, as a place of instruction where messages are to be looked for from God to the soul. The Psalmist describes himself as perplexed by the dealings of God, and then as comforted by the thought that God's way "is in the sanctuary." Now if you turn to the seventy-third psalm, bearing the name of the same author, Asaph, as is borne by that in which our text occurs, you will find a very similar description of perplexity, and of comfort derived in some way from the sanctuary. The writer is greatly staggered by the prosperity of the wicked, and tempted to receive it as an evidence against the strictness of God's moral government. And how does he overcome the temptation? You shall hear what he says, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I the end." He obtained, you perceive, instruction in the sanctuary, which sufficed to the removing his doubts, and the restoring his confidence in the righteousness of the divine dealings. It cannot, therefore, be an unwarrantable supposition, that the reference to the sanctuary in our text, is a reference to the public ordinances of religion as instrumental to the communicating knowledge, and the strengthening faith. The Psalmist is again perplexed by much that is intricate in the dealings of God. But again he bethinks him of the sanctuary: he remembers that God's way "is in the sanctuary"—in other words, that God's method of teaching is by and through the ordinances of the sanctuary; and, filled with gratitude and wonder that there should be such a channel of intercourse with the Crea-

tor, he breaks into an acknowledgment of his unrivalled greatness.

Hence we seem justified in transferring the verse to ourselves, in regarding it simply as containing an argument for the greatness of God, drawn from his working through the instrumentality of sermons and sacraments. His "way is in the sanctuary." It is in buildings devoted to the purposes of his worship; and through the ministrations of his ordained servants, that he commonly carries on his work of turning sinners from the error of their ways, and building up his people in their faith. That there may be exceptions to such a rule as this, no one would for a moment dispute. Cases unquestionably occur in which conversion is effected without the instrumentality of a sermon, or in which the soul is rapidly edified, though debarred from all public means of grace. But nevertheless the general rule is, that it pleases God "by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," not only, you observe, to bring men in the first instance to belief; but to carry them forward in godliness till belief issues in final salvation. We magnify our office. We claim no authority whatsoever for the man: but we claim the very highest for the messenger, the ambassador. Again and again would we seize opportunities of impressing upon you the importance of entertaining just views of the ministerial office. There are numbers of you, we must believe, who constantly come up to God's house with the very tempers and feelings which you would carry to a lecture-room; with all that excited intellect, and all that critical spirit, which fit you for nothing but the sitting in judgment upon what shall be delivered, as upon a process of argument, or a specimen of elocution. There is practically no recognition of the commission which is borne by the man who addresses you, no influential persuasion of his being an appointed messenger through whom you may hope that God will graciously infuse light into the understanding, and warmth into the heart: but, on the contrary, he is thought to stand before you with no higher claim on your attention than what he can make good by his own mental powers, and with no greater



likelihood of speaking to your profit than is furnished by his own skill as an expositor of truth. And upon this account mainly it is, as we have been long painfully convinced, that there are such insufficient results from the services of God's house, that Sabbath after Sabbath passes away, and scarce leaves a token that good has been wrought. You are not in the moral attitude which is presupposed in the appointment of the preacher. You are in the attitude of critics, you are in the attitude of a jury, having to pronounce a verdict after hearing certain statements. But the preacher is not before you as a debater, the preacher is not before you as a pleader; and consequently your attitude is just the reverse of that which ought to be assumed: the preacher is before you as an ambassador, and therefore ought you to be in the attitude of mere listeners to an overture from the God whom you have offended, of expectants of a communication from him in whose name the preacher addresses you. The evil is, you do not feel that God's way "is in the sanctuary;" and therefore you give too low a character both to sermons and sacraments, failing to view in them the appointed instrumentality through which God works in converting and confirming the soul.

But, nevertheless, the fact remains, that God's way "is in the sanctuary." And a very surprising fact it is, one calculated to excite in us the highest thoughts of the supremacy of God. We wish you to contrast the agency with the result. We are always much struck with the expression of St. Paul to Timothy, "in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." The preacher, who is to be an instrument in the saving of others, stands in the same need of salvation himself. In the great work of gathering in the nations, and fixing the religion of Jesus in the households and hearts of the human population, the Almighty makes not use of lofty agents who have kept their first estate, but of the fallen and feeble, who are themselves in peril, themselves but wrestlers for immortality. It is easy to imagine a different arrangement. In his Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul has supposed the case of an angel from heaven discharging

the office of a preacher to men. It might have been so. In place of assembling to listen to the exhortations, and receive the counsels, of one who shares with you your sinfulness, and is naturally under the same condemnation, you might have thronged to the sanctuary, to hearken to a celestial messenger, who came down in angelic beauty, and offered you in God's name a home in the land from which he had descended. And we cannot doubt that you would have hung with surpassing interest on the lips of the heavenly speaker; and that as, with an eloquence, and a pathos, and a persuasiveness, such as are wholly unknown in the most touching human oratory, he warned you against evil and urged you to righteousness, your hearts would have burned within you, and been often wrought up to a resolve of pressing towards the region to which the seraph invited you. We fully believe, that, if some mysterious visitant, unearthly in form and raiment, were to occupy this pulpit, a deep and almost painful solemnity would pervade the assembly; and that as, in tones such as were never modulated by human organs, and words such as never flowed from human lips, he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," there would be produced on the mass of riveted listeners an effect, which might not indeed be permanent, but which, for the time, would be wholly without parallel in all that is ascribed to powerful speaking. Neither can it be thought that an angel would preach with less affection than a man, because not exposed to our dangers, nor linked with us by any natural ties. We know that angels watch for the repentance of sinners; that, when the poorest of our race returns, like the prodigal, to his Father, a new impulse is given to their happiness; and we cannot therefore doubt, that, if any one of these glorious beings were to be visible amongst us, and to assume the office of teacher, he would plead with such passionate-ness and warmth, and throw so much of heart into his remonstrance, as would leave no room for a suspicion that difference in nature incapacitated him for deep sympathy with those to whom he spake. But, to pass over other and obvious consequences of the substitution

of angels for men as preachers of christianity, it is easy to see, that, under such an arrangement, we should have been apt to lose sight of the operations of the Holy Spirit. You find St. Paul, when speaking of the Gospel as intrusted to himself and his fellow-laborers in the ministry, saying to the Corinthians, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." He assigns it, you see, as a reason why the Gospel was committed to weak and erring men, that God might have all the glory resulting from the publication. And undoubtedly the process secures this result. If God worked by mighty instruments, such as angels, if the engines employed were, to all appearance, adequate to the ends to be effected; the honor of success would at least be divided, and the ambassador might be thought to have helped forward, by his own power, the designs of him by whom he had been sent. But, as the case now stands, the services of the sanctuary all go to the demonstrating the supremacy of God, because, whilst undoubtedly instrumental to the effecting vast results, they are manifestly insufficient in themselves for any such achievement.

And we should like you to add to his, that, not only does God employ men in preference to angels, but he commonly acts through what is weak in men, and not through what is strong. It is perhaps a single sentence in a sermon, a text which is quoted, a remark to which probably, if asked, the preacher would attach less importance than to any other part of his discourse, which makes its way into the soul of an unconverted hearer. We wish that there could be compiled a book which should register the sayings, the words, which, falling from the lips of preachers in different ages, have penetrated that thick coating of indifference and prejudice which lies naturally on every man's heart, and reached the soil in which vegetation is possible. We are quite persuaded that you would not find many whole sermons in such a book, not many long pieces of elaborate reasoning, not many argumentative demonstrations of human danger and human need. The volume would be a volume, we believe, of little frag-

ments: it would be made up of simple sentiments and brief statements: in the majority of instances, a few syllables would constitute the "grain of mustard seed," to which Christ himself likened his religion at the outset. We are only asserting what we reckon attested by the whole tenor of ministerial experience, when we say that sermons which God honors to the conversion of hearers, are generally effective in some solitary paragraph; and that the results which they produce may fairly be traced, not to the lengthened oration, as a compact and well-adjusted engine, but to one of its assertions, or its remonstrances, which possibly, had you subjected the discourse to the judgment of a critic, would have been left out as injurious, or at least not conducive, to the general effect. And we know of no more powerful evidence of a fixed determination on the part of God, to humble man by allowing him to be nothing but an instrument in his hands, than is derived from this fact of the ineffectiveness of all except perhaps one line in a sermon. God will oftentimes pass by it, as it were, and set aside an array of argument which has been constructed with great care, or a stirring appeal into which has been gathered every motive which seems calculated to rouse a dormant immortality, and, seizing on the sentence which the speaker thinks the weakest, or the paragraph in which there is nothing of rhetoric, will throw it into the soul as the germ of a genuine and permanent piety. And all this goes to the making good what we are anxious to prove, that the challenge in the second clause of our text is altogether borne out by the assertion in the first. There is no finer proof of the power of an author, than that he can compass great designs by inconsiderable means. If the means be great, we expect a great effect, and, when we find it, hardly count it an evidence of the greatness of the agent. But if the means be inconsiderable, and the produced effect great, we are lost in admiration, and want terms in which to express our sense of the might of the worker.

Let us see then how our argument stands. What result is greater than that of the renewal of human nature, the transforming into a new creature one



"born in sin, and shapen in iniquity?" Where, in all the compass of wonderful things, is a more wonderful to be found than the change effected by conversion, or the after and gradual preparation of man for immortality? The being who is naturally the enemy of God, averse from holiness, with affections that fix exclusively on earthly things, is cast, as it were, into a fresh mould, and comes forth devoted to the service of his Maker, desirous of conformity to the image of Christ, and prepared to act on the conviction that here he has "no abiding city." He perseveres through a long series of trials and difficulties, contending with and conquering various enemies, acquiring in greater and greater measure the several graces which are characteristic of genuine faith, till at length, fully "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," he enters "the valley of the shadow of death," and presses through it to glory.

Yes, indeed, it is a vast achievement. Let us compare it with the employed instrumentality: this will surely bear some apparent proportion to the result. "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary." We know that it is by and through certain public ordinances of religion that thou dost generally turn men to thyself, and afterwards strengthen them to persevere in a heavenward course. Then we will hasten to the sanctuary, that we may observe the agency through which is effected what so much moves our wonder. Surely we shall find an angel ministering to the people, the being of a higher sphere, clothed in surpassing radiance, and discoursing with more than mortal power on the lofty topics of God and his dealings. Surely, if there be sacraments, they will be manifestly pregnant with energy, stupendous institutions, of which it shall be impossible to partake without feeling them the vehicles for communications of grace. Surely, in some august and overpowering mode, by a voice from the firmament, or by rich visions of immortality, will God make himself known to his people, employing means which shall evidently be adapted to the taking captive the whole man, and persuading or forcing the soul into an attitude of awful adoration. Ah, my brethren, how widely

different is what is actually found in the sanctuary. God is there working by sermons and sacraments. But the sermons are those of a man of like passions with yourselves, one frail and fallible, who has perhaps little or no power of enlightening your understandings, and certainly none of penetrating your hearts. There is moreover no proportion between his natural abilities as a reasoner or a speaker, and his success as an ambassador; on the contrary, the most honored is often, to all appearance, the worst equipped; and even where the man has strength, it may be said to be through his weakness that the chief good is wrought. And the sacraments—assuredly to a carnal eye nothing can be less commanding than these. There is an initiatory sacrament, "baptism for the remission of sins;" but it consists in nothing but the pronouncing a few words, and the sprinkling a little water. There is a sacrament through which membership with Christ is continued, and grace imparted for the many duties and trials of the christian; but a morsel of bread, and a drop of wine, consecrated by the priest, and received by the believer, are all that is visible in the wondrous transaction. Yes, by the sermons, not of a glorious angel, but of a sinful man; by sacraments, not imprinted with signs of Divinity, but so simple and unostentatious, that they seem to have no special fitness for the transmission of supernatural things; does God gather out a church from the world, and then train it for immortality. And in this he is great: verily, "the excellency of the power" is of him, not of us. "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary;" but, when we turn to the sanctuary, and observe through what a slight, and apparently incompetent, instrumentality thou dost bring round results which fill us with amazement, we can but adore thee in thine Almightyness; we can but exclaim with a voice of reverence and rapture, "Who is so great a God as our God?"

Now we think that in the successive illustrations of our text, which have thus been advanced, there has been much to suggest practical reflections of no common worth. Was God's way in the Jewish temple of old? Was he

passing, in all the sacrifices and ceremonies of the temple, to the completion of the work of our redemption? Then let us not fail to study with all diligence the law: in the law was the germ, or bud of the Gospel; and it will aid us much in understanding the system, when fully laid open, to examine it attentively whilst being gradually unfolded. Christianity, after all, is but Judaism in a more advanced stage; and it must therefore be our wisdom to trace carefully the religion in its progress towards perfection, if we hope to comprehend it when that perfection was reached. It is true that types derive all their significance from Christ; but it is equally true that they reflect the light which they receive from the cross, and thus illustrate the sacrifice by which themselves are explained.

Is it again true that God's way was "in the sanctuary," in the holy of holies, that place of dread secrecy and sanctity? Then, as we have already inferred, let us be satisfied that God's dealings are righteous, however incomprehensible: we may not be able to explain them; for a majestic veil shrouds the place in which he works; but we may be confident that they are ordered in holiness, inasmuch as that place is of unspotted purity.

And lastly, is God's way still "in the sanctuary?" Is it in the sanctuary, the house devoted to his service, that he specially reveals himself, and communicates supplies of his grace? Shall we not then learn to set a high worth on the public services of religion, to enter "the courts of the Lord's house" in humility, yet in hope, with holy fear, but nevertheless with high expectation, as knowing that we are to meet our Creator, but to meet him as "the God of all grace?" O for something of the spirit of the Psalmist, "a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." What rapid growth would there be in christian virtues, what knowledge, what peace, what joy, what assurance, if we had a practical consciousness that God's way "is in the sanctuary;" and if we therefore came up to the sanctuary on purpose to see him, and to be cheered by his presence. You find it said of Hezekiah, that, when he had received a threatening and insulting message from the king of Assyria, he

went straightway into the house of the Lord. He might have sought guidance and comfort in his own chamber: but he well knew where God was most sure to be found, and therefore did he hasten at once to the temple. My brethren, let me again say that we magnify, not ourselves, but our office. God is my witness that I have no thought, that, by any wisdom of my own, by skill as a reasoner, by force as a speaker, or by persuasiveness as a pleader, I may be able to instruct you, to animate, or to comfort. We will not dispute, for a moment, that you may read better sermons at home than you can hear in the church. But the difference between the preached and the printed sermon lies in this, that preaching is God's ordinance and printing is not. It pleases God to save men "by the foolishness of preaching;" or, more accurately, "by the foolishness of the proclamation." And therefore is it that we set the pulpit against the press, and declare that you are more likely to be benefited by listening to the simplest sermon, delivered in great weakness, than by studying the volumes of the most able divines. When, but not until, it shall cease to be true that God's way "is in the sanctuary," you may hope to find those assistances and comforts in more private means of grace, which are offered you through public.

We scarcely need add that such remarks as these apply to sacraments as well as to sermons. Yes, ye whom I never see at the table of the Lord, who expect to be nourished though ye continually refuse the proffered sustenance, we venture to tell you that nothing can supply to you the want of that which you sinfully neglect. I have visited many, very many, on their deathbeds, persons of various ranks and various ages. But I never yet found an individual happy in the prospect of dissolution, who had habitually neglected the Lord's Supper. How should he be? How can he be strong, if he have lived without food? I know that God, if he please, can work without means: but, when he has instituted means, you have no right to expect that he will. He is on the mountain and on the flood, in the forests, and amid the stars: but his way "is in the sanctuary;" and if therefore you would know him as a



great God, great to pardon, great to perfect for immortality, you must seek | him in the sanctuary, or not wonder if he never be found.

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## SERMON XIII.

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### EQUITY OF THE FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

PREACHED AT CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, DECEMBER 11, 1836.

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“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”—Luke, 16 : 10.

There is no great difficulty in tracing the connection between these words and those by which they are immediately preceded. Our Lord had just delivered the parable of the unjust steward, and was admonishing his disciples to imitate the prudence, though not the immorality, of that unprincipled character. “I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” Though riches cannot purchase heaven for their possessor, they may be so employed as to give evidence of christian faith and love, and when thus used, they may be said to provide witnesses who will testify at the last to the righteousness of their owners. The suffering and the destitute who have been relieved through the wealth, of which christian principle has dictated the application, may be regarded as friends who will appear in support of their benefactor, and prove his right to admission into the mansions prepared for those who have been faithful in their stewardship.

But this statement of Christ seemed applicable to none but the rich. “Why,” his disciples might have asked, “admonish us to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, when we have nothing of this world’s wealth, and,

therefore, want the means of obeying the injunction.” It was probably to meet this feeling, which he saw rising in their minds, that Christ went on to address them in the words of our text, “Ye judge wrongly (as if he should say) to conclude that because poor, and not rich, you cannot do that which I have just recommended. ‘He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much;’” so that the right use of little may place a man in as advantageous a position as the right use of much. The question is not what amount of talent has been intrusted to an individual, but what has been his employment of such measure as he had; for if he have had but little, and have used that little ill, he is as criminal as though his powers had been greater, and their misuse correspondent to their extent. “He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”

It thus appears to have been the object of our Lord to inform his disciples that their poverty would be no hindrance to securing to themselves the advantages within reach of the rich; and that neither would it furnish them with any excuse for the neglect of those duties whose performance seemed facilitated by the possession of wealth. He makes his appeal to a great principle—whether in the nature of

things or the dealings of God—the principle that, if a man be faithful up to the measure of his ability, or unjust up to the measure of his ability, when that ability has been small, it may be concluded that he would be equally faithful or equally unjust were his ability greatly multiplied, and that therefore he may be dealt with in both cases as though there had been this multiplication, and the correspondent increase, whether in fidelity or injustice.

But though we may easily trace the bearing of Christ's assertion on other parts of the chapter, as I have already intimated, it is not to be denied that the principle he announces is not self-evident, but requires to be illustrated before it can be received. Whatever may be said of the particular case of the employment of wealth, and the equality that may be established between the widow, who has but two mites to give, and the man of vast means, who has thousands at his disposal, there is clearly some difficulty in understanding, as a general truth, that to be faithful in the least is to be faithful in much, and that to be unjust in the least is to be unjust also in much. At all events, there are certain limitations which must be put on the assertion, or it must be interpreted with reference to the temper that is displayed, rather than to the action which may have been performed. We can hardly question that some men who are faithful in the least, would not also be faithful in much. The honesty which is proof against temptation whilst dishonesty would procure but a trifling advantage, might probably be overcome if great gain were to follow; and, upon the other hand, there might be men, who, though unjust in the least, would not also be unjust in the much; men who think it lawful to practice the mean trick, or the contemptible evasion, but who would shun the being engaged in any great fraud.

We cannot well think that our Lord designed to affirm that every man who proved himself faithful in little matters would be as sure to be faithful in much; or that wherever there is dishonesty in some trifling particular, there would be as certainly dishonesty if greater trust were reposed. This would be practically to take no account of the differ-

ent strength of different temptations, or the various motives operating under different circumstances. But it seems evident from the connection which we have endeavored to trace between the text and the preceding verses, that our Lord refers to the estimate which God forms of human actions, an estimate which is made upon the dispositions which those actions display, rather than from the relative magnitude of the actions in the judgment of men. The man who has but little, but who is as charitable as his means will allow, is placed by God upon the same footing with another who has made an equally good use of far larger resources. The man who, with slender abilities, has done his utmost in the cause of righteousness, shall be accounted with as though his talents had been considerable, and his employment of them had been wholly in the service of God. And, upon the other hand, he who fails to improve the little which he has, shall incur the same condemnation as though the little had been much. This, we say, appears the scope of the assertion of our Lord. He is not actually to be understood as affirming that wherever there was faithfulness in the little, there would assuredly be in the much; or that injustice in the largest transactions must necessarily follow upon injustice in the least. There are, indeed, senses and degrees in which even this assertion may be substantiated, and we shall probably find occasion to refer to these hereafter; but we think it evident, from the context, that our Lord's chief design was to state that men with very different powers and opportunities might occupy precisely the same position in God's sight, and that, consequently, it would not necessarily be any disadvantage to the poor man that he was so far behind the other in the ability to do good. The verse on which we are discoursing must be classed with those passages which affirm, in one way or another, that the different circumstances in which men are placed, their different capabilities and resources, as members of society, will not necessarily affect their future condition. Those who have been the highest, and those who have been the lowest upon earth, may ultimately receive precisely the



same recompense, because God will judge each man by his employment of what he had, without reference to whether it were little, or whether it were much. It will be our business to endeavor to illustrate the text, when thus considered, as announcing a great principle in the Divine dealings with our race. Of course, objections may be raised to the equity or the justice of such a procedure as is here ascribed to God, and these we must labor to remove.

But we shall, probably, embrace whatever is necessary for the explanation or the defence of the principle now brought under review, if we endeavor to show you, in the *first* place, THAT THE BEING UNJUST IN THE LITTLE FURNISHES A STRONG GROUND FOR A MAN'S BEING DEALT WITH AS THOUGH HE HAD BEEN UNJUST IN THE MUCH; and, in the *second* place, THAT MERCY DOES NO VIOLENCE TO EQUITY, IF FAITHFULNESS IN THE LEAST BE RECOMPENSED IN THE SAME MANNER AS FAITHFULNESS IN THE MUCH.

Now we will go back at once to the first entrance of evil, and examine how the principle of the text was acted upon in the case of the common parents of human kind. We are well aware that it was only, to all appearance, in a very slight particular that Adam was unfaithful, and we are equally aware that he could not have incurred a heavier condemnation had his sin been in all human calculation of most surpassing enormity. And it is a question often put whether it were quite what we should expect from such a Being as God, that a punishment should have been inflicted apparently so disproportionate to the offence, and that for a fault which seemed so slight as that of merely eating the forbidden fruit, there should have come down upon our forefather a vengeance which could not have been increased, whatever had been the crime. It is evident that the principle here acted upon is the principle of the text; and that Adam, because he was unjust in the least, was dealt with as though he had been unjust in the much. Was this at all at variance with the known attributes of God? The question which we have thus stated, conveys at least a suspicion that it was; but that suspicion must disappear upon more careful ex-

amination. We readily admit that it was but a slight trial to which Adam was exposed, but not that it was a slight sin which Adam committed. The fact that the trial was but slight, is utterly inconsistent with the supposition that the sin was but small: for, it is evident, that the slighter the trial, the less the excuse in case of failure; and that the less the excuse, the greater the guilt. The whole question to be decided, in the instance of Adam, was whether he would, or would not, obey God; and it was only giving him every possible advantage to make the trial of his obedience on a particular apparently the most inconsiderable. If the trial had been made on some far greater particular, we should certainly have heard of the strength of the temptation, and the very objection that is now urged against the equity of the sentence would have been still urged, upon the principle that the creature had been tasked beyond his powers of resistance. So that nothing can be more unfair than the dwelling on what is thought the smallness of Adam's sin. It is worthy of nothing but the most determined scepticism, to talk of the insignificance of eating the forbidden fruit, as though it had been for the action in itself, and not for the action, as a test of obedience, that our common father incurred the loss of God's favor. The action in itself was in the strictest sense indifferent, neither morally good, nor morally bad; but the moment the action was made the test of obedience it acquired an importance which could not be exceeded. The very circumstance of its being in itself so inconsiderable, did but enhance the immeasurable criminality of its being committed. If we allow that, up to the instant of prohibition, Adam might have plucked and eaten the fruit without doing the least wrong, this interferes not with the argument that the instant the prohibition was issued, what had been before indifferent became incalculably criminal. Nay, as we have just said, it does but enhance the criminality; for this, only goes to the proving that God subjected man to the slightest possible trial; and, beyond all question, what proves the slightness of the trial, proves equally the greatness of his guilt. Therefore, we know not with

what show of fairness it can be objected, that there was any evident disproportion between the first offence and the punishment which it provoked. Unless you can show that it would have been unjust in God to have punished any action of disobedience with death, you certainly cannot show, that, in regard to the eating the forbidden fruit, there was not as thorough a disobedience in this case as there could have been in any, perhaps, less excusable. So that it is only saying that no case can be imagined which might be justly punished, to say that the incurred vengeance was greater than Adam's sin deserved. Men may argue then that Adam was unjust in the least, but this affects not the equity of his having been dealt with as though he had been unjust in the much. He had been made to pass through the gentlest trust, and exposed to the smallest possible amount of temptation, and nevertheless he failed; he was found wanting upon trial, and was speedily overcome by temptation. Does not this undeniably prove, that, had the trial been greater and the temptation stronger, he would have been equally found disobedient to his God? By failing in the least, he irresistibly showed that he would have failed in the much; and thus was his eating the forbidden fruit irresistible evidence that there would have been the same unfaithfulness had God appointed a higher test of his criminality. So that if you can imagine to yourselves more heinous sins which Adam might have committed—if you will suppose him violating commandments of a loftier and more severe kind than that which he actually infringed, you do not convict him of any delinquency of which he may not be convicted, on the evidence of what you think his inconsiderable offence. Unfallen as he then was, the only thing to be tried was his obedience; and to disobey in the smallest point was to show himself ready to set his own will on all points in opposition to God's. And, therefore, we think, there was the most accurate proportion between what Adam did, and what Adam suffered. He had done the worst thing which could be done in his circumstances; and therefore he deserved the worst that could be awarded to transgression. Yea, and if other

orders of beings, spectators of what occurred in this new province of creation, had wondered that results so disastrous should follow upon what appeared so trifling an action, and to have demanded whether it consisted with the known attributes of their Maker, that vengeance so tremendous should overtake the doer, it would have been enough to have reminded them that, situated as Adam was, the eating of the fruit was to wage war with God; and they would have found all their surprise removed, by observing, that more heinous crimes were so involved in what seemed the less, that it was truly equitable to deal with men upon the principle, that "he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

And we have no right to limit the application of the principle. From the mode in which it is announced by the Savior we must conclude, that it is generally acted upon by God in his dealings with men. We pass, therefore, from Adam to ourselves, and we inquire into the equity of being dealt with, if unjust in the least, as though we had been unjust in the much. We have already said, that men would not be warranted in drawing the inference which the text seems to draw; that they would not, that is, be always justified in concluding, that if an individual had been found unfaithful in some trifling particular, he would necessarily be so, if greater trusts should be given into his keeping. Yet the admission which we thus make requires to be guarded. It is rather because many considerations of prudence and policy might operate to the keeping a man faithful in much, than because we repose any confidence in his honesty, that we would trust him, after proving him unjust in the least. We have so far a belief in the rigid applicability of the test, that we reckon that he who can be unjust in the matter of a penny would also be unjust in the largest transactions, if there were stronger temptations and stronger security against being detected. There is an end at once to all our confidence in the integrity of an individual, the moment we ascertain that he has knowingly defrauded us of a solitary farthing; and though we might afterwards



trust him with large sums, and allow him great power over our property, yet would it not be from any persuasion that he might be safely depended on, but solely from a feeling that the motives to honesty were stronger than the motives to dishonesty, and that it was so much for the man's interest to be faithful that we ran no risk in employing his agency. This is virtually the true account of the greatest part of that apparent confidence, which gives so fine an aspect to the transactions of a mercantile community. You observe, what has all the air of a most unbounded trust in human integrity; so that property is shipped and consigned from one land to another, without the least misgiving as to the honor of the various persons through whose hands it must pass. It would hardly be possible, if wickedness were really purged from the world, so that the man could not be found who would wilfully wrong his fellow-men, it would hardly be possible to give to our commercial dealings a franker and more cordial appearance—an appearance which might more persuade an observer of the general prevalence of an acknowledged trust-worthiness. We believe there can be no question, that all this is to be chiefly referred to the consciousness that it is vastly for man's interest that they should deal honestly with each other. If society could be brought into such a condition that the temptations to dishonesty should be far stronger than the inducements to honesty, or that the risk and consequence of being detected in fraudulent dealings had become wholly inconsiderable, in place of being what they are, too great to be encountered, except by the most daring—why, we should soon find almost universal suspicion succeeding to the present universal confidence, and men now content with insuring against shipwreck, would be more in fear of one another than of the rock or the tempest. So that it is not, through the known prevalence of integrity that merchants feel so safe in making their various distant consignments; still less is it through any idea that injustice in the least is no argument for injustice in the much, that the man who will drive a hard bargain, or over-reach a customer, or practice some deception of

which the law takes no notice, is yet intrusted by others with large fractions of their property. Much of the virtue which is in the world is due to nothing but the not being tempted; and, perhaps, yet more of the honesty is owing to the strictness of the laws rather than of principles. Though, as we have said, we do not always in practice conclude that he that is unjust in the least would be unjust also in the much, we certainly have no farther confidence in him than we derive from the statute-book of the land. If we feel sure that he will not commit a great fraud, it is only because we believe the dread of legal process will fill effectually the place of a fine and ever-active conscience. So that it is after all a great recognition among ourselves of the principle that he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. It is not a recognition which is evidenced by our refusing to put any thing in the power of the individual whom we suspect or have convicted of the contemptible trick, or the dishonorable evasion; but it is a recognition which is evidenced by the reasons by which we justify to ourselves any after confidence in the man—reasons which are invariably fetched from the defences and securities, as we think them—provided for us by the laws of the land, and not in any degree from that moral rectitude and firmness, which, where-soever they exist, constitute a safeguard which cannot be equalled.

And to go yet farther than this. We never feel much surprised if an individual who proved himself not over scrupulous in little things, be at length detected in some great act of dishonesty. The tradesman, of whom we have reason to believe that he would use a false balance, or palm off an inferior article on his customers—why, I am never unprepared for hearing, that he has brought himself within the reach of the law by some flagrant attempt to enrich himself at other men's cost. And the merchant, of whom I can once ascertain that he has soiled his hands with dishonorable profit, outwitting other men, taking undue advantage, though not in such a manner as to expose himself to the censures of the law—it never amazes me to be told that he has utterly lost all his credit,

and that he has been guilty of frauds that must make him an outcast. If I felt any surprise it would only be that I had thought him too shrewd and too politic to venture so far, and because I had calculated on his prudence, though not on his principle. I am so ready in practice to admit that injustice in the least argues that there will be injustice in the much, that I hear nothing more than I myself could have predicted, when informed, that he who was at one time merely a pilferer, and a defrauder in things which could not be noticed, has become, as his trade or his expertness increased, a thorough master in cheating, and made himself infamous by the boldness and extent of his frauds.

It is farther worth your observing how accurately the assertion of the text is verified and substantiated in regard to the use made of wealth. This is the case to which Christ specially refers, and which ought not, therefore, to pass without some share of remark. If a man have been illiberal, and shown a want of christian charity whilst his income was small, what will ordinarily be the effect of an increase in his income? Why, to make him yet more illiberal and uncharitable. The instances of this are very curious, but quite frequent enough to press themselves upon the attention of any ordinary observer. If a man have done what he could with small means, and distributed of the little to those yet more straitened, you will ordinarily find that with the increase in his means there will be an increase of his charities. So that proof is afforded that he that is faithful in the least is faithful also in the much. But exactly the reverse takes place when a niggardly and churlish man gains an accession of property; even his household arrangements will be often on a less, rather than on a more, liberal scale than before; and if he be parsimonious in his family, we may well expect that he will not be more openhanded with others. And we think it quite to be accounted for on natural principles, why an increase in his income should thus produce an increase in penuriousness. So long as his income is little more than adequate to the wants of his family, there is no power of accumulation; the little that

can be saved, with even rigid economy, is scarcely worth laying by, and the man may, perhaps, therefore, be ready to bestow it in charity. But so soon as his income is more than adequate to his wants, the power of accumulation is possessed, and every farthing which can be saved may go to increase the store, which is more doted on as being the object of a new passion, or the produce of a new ability. Thus what now remains over and above the necessary expenditure is worth being invested as capital, and the possessor will grudge the least gift to the poor, as being so much withdrawn from his hoard. But so long as the surplus was too inconsiderable to be converted into capital, it was squandered on superfluities, or, perhaps, in some fit of generosity, bestowed upon the necessitous. And so it comes to pass, that where there has been no real principle of charity, whilst the means were contracted, there will often be even less of the appearance when those means are enlarged; and that the man whose poverty has been made an excuse for his doing nothing for the destitute—though if he had really loved God he would have found opportunities of showing it—manifests the same illiberality when he has ample power in his hands. And what then does he do but irresistibly prove with how great truth it may be concluded that “he that is unjust in the least” will be “unjust also in much?”

Now we have made this statement as to the degree in which the principle in question is recognized, even among ourselves, in order that you may be better prepared for its thorough introduction into God's dealings with our race. If, with all our short-sightedness and imperfection of judgment, we find cause to conclude that, where there is injustice in the meanest particular, there will be equal injustice in the greatest, provided only there were a concurrence of power and opportunity, we cannot marvel that God, who reads the heart, and observes all its undeveloped tendencies, should visit a man unfaithful in the least with the same vengeance as another unfaithful in the much. An inconsiderable act may furnish as good evidence of the disposition as the most monstrous. He who



has but small powers of defrauding, and defrauds to the amount of a penny, gives as thorough a demonstration of the want of all principle, as another, who, under a different temptation, forges a name, and thereby gains a thousand pounds. And, if it be the same demonstration of the want of principle, it is quite to be expected that, when the two appear at the tribunal of God, they will be accounted equally unjust, the difference in the act being altogether owing to the difference in circumstances, and not a jot to the difference in the staple of character. Yet when once we take it as a maxim in the Divine dealings, that he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much, we seem furnished with a principle of judgment which will be applicable in the case of earth's remotest families, and every individual, whatsoever his condition.

Let us for a moment combine the two clauses of the text, and there can be no difficulty in understanding how those who had the least moral advantages may be placed hereafter on a footing with those who have had the greatest. If faithfulness in the least furnish a sufficient index as to faithfulness in the much, and injustice in the least, as injustice in the much, then will there be as accurate tests to which to bring the conduct of the heathen as the conduct of the christian; that of those who have enjoyed but few means of grace, as of others on whom they were bestowed in profusion. We are of course certain that where much has been given more will be required; and we cannot, therefore, suppose that as great an amount of condemnation will be incurred by those who have not heard the Gospel, as by those who have heard it, and despised it.

Yet the principle asserted in our text appears to bring the two much nearer to an equality than we have been accustomed to place them. At all events, it goes the length of asserting, that as good ground may be furnished for the condemnation of the heathen, by his having been unjust in the little, as for that of the christian, by his having been unjust in the much. The heathen may say at last, "I had but few advantages," but the reply will be, that his non-improvement of those few is as conclusive against him as would have

been his non-improvement of the many. He had the relics of tradition; the lingering traces of patriarchal religion, which have never been wholly obliterated from among the most savage and ignorant of human kind. He had the foot-prints of Deity visible in all the scenes by which he was encompassed, and, yet more, he had within himself the witness of conscience—that monitor which is found in the lowest depths of degradation, and which never ceases to lift an impassioned voice in support of the truth, that there is a righteous moral Governor. Though man may have almost debased himself to a level with the brute by superstition, and yet more by vice, and though all this may be but little, when compared with the abundant privileges which belong to those on whom falls the rich light of revelation—nevertheless, if the heathen have been unfaithful in this little, he will have no right to complain that nothing more was vouchsafed, and he will not be able to assert the probability that, if unfaithful in the least, he would have been faithful in the much. The probability is all the other way; for it is *by* and *through* conscience that, under every dispensation, the Spirit of the living God continues its strivings with man; and if conscience plead in vain, then, whatever the dispensation, evidence is given that its means of grace will not be effectual, and therefore might the inference be fairly drawn, that having been unjust in the least, the heathen would also be unjust in the much; and, so far from having a right to plead in extenuation of his wickedness the want of christian advantages, he may even be taxed with the neglect of those advantages, inferred from his neglect of what were actually bestowed. In like manner we deny not that in a christian community there are very different trusts deposited by God with different men. Whilst one has the benefit of religious instruction from his very infancy, and has been endowed with large talents, and placed in a sphere where he might act a conspicuous part as a servant of God, another has been cradled in ignorance, and apparently debarred by his very condition from acquiring much of christianity for himself, and yet more from imparting it to others; and

we do not suppose of these men, that, if both are condemned, they will be condemned with the same condemnation; but we do suppose, on the principle of the text, that the man who has been tried only in a little, will have no right to complain that he was not tried in the much; and more, we should conclude, that it might, with the most thorough justice, be inferred, that, having been unfaithful in the least, he would have been equally unfaithful in much. It will be owing to nothing but the exercise of Divine goodness that he receives not the very same punishment for his unfaithfulness in the little, as will be awarded to the other for his unfaithfulness in much, seeing that he has given decisive evidence of a disposition, which would have made him unfaithful, whatever the amount committed to his keeping. So that by just the same argument—which we ourselves are wont to maintain when we reason from dishonesty in a trifle to a fundamental want of principle, which would produce, under any other circumstances, dishonesty of the most daring kind—may we conclude God would deal only righteously, if he treated a man, unlawful in the least, as though he had been unlawful in much. Yea, we can pass from our own decisions, and our own inferences, when the matter in question is simply the estimate which may be formed of a man, supposing him intrusted with much, from what he has shown himself when intrusted with little. Apply our reasoning to the case of the final judgment of different nations and different conditions: and, as there goes up to the tribunal the pagan, who never heard the Gospel of Jesus, he is followed by the christian, to whom God spake in these last days by his Son; and as the man of large talents, of unbounded means, and of unlimited privilege, stands side by side with another, unto whom has been allotted the very lowest of moral advantages, and the very lowest opportunities of doing God service, you wonder how men so differently circumstanced, can be equitably brought to the same trial. Why we feel that we announce to you a principle, on which the judgment may justly proceed, whatever the diversities of character and of condition, when we simply quote to

you the latter clause of the text—"He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

Now you will hardly fail to perceive that, throughout all this labored illustration of principle, we have not ventured to affirm that unfaithfulness in the least will be as severely visited as unfaithfulness in much; but only that the one furnishes as good evidence of character as the other, so that deficiency of means will be no excuse for deficiency in improvement. We have not ventured to go further than this, because we know, that it is to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for Chorazin and Bethsaida—for those, that is, who have been unjust in the least, than for those who have been unjust in much. But this is, probably, owing, in the main, to the great mercy of God, though there may be cases in which he distinctly knows, and will act on the knowledge, that those who have been unfaithful in the least would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, had they been favored with much. Unfaithfulness in little is so strong in evidence in general that there would be unfaithfulness in much, that we do not believe that it would be at variance with justice, that if he who has exhibited the one were dealt with in precisely the same manner as if he had exhibited the other; and, if not at variance with justice, we ascribe exclusively to the mercy of God, that there is to be the gentler punishment, where there has been the least of privilege. So that a man is to have, as it were, the benefit of the supposition, that he might have been faithful in much, though he has been unfaithful in the least.

But if it be necessary thus to limit the application of the second clause of the text, in order to preserve its consistency with other portions of Scripture, there is, in each instance, no respect to the person; for we propose to show you, in the last place, *that mercy does no violence to equity if faithfulness in the least be recompensed in the same measure as faithfulness in the much.*

Hitherto we have engaged you with the case of unfaithfulness in the least; and our object has been to show you that it might justly be dealt with as though it had been unfaithfulness in



much, however God in His mercy may extend to it a less severe measure. But we now come to the case of faithfulness in the least, and here the testimony of the Holy Scriptures is in favor of the unrestricted application of the text, and of our holding and affirming that God will allow to those who had but little, and used that little well, as brilliant a portion as to those who, having much, were alike faithful in its use. It is here that we can appeal to such passages as that which declares, that "he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward;" an undeniable statement that the prophet's reward may be gained by those who are never actually engaged in doing the prophet's work; or as that which makes the poor widow's two mites outweigh, in God's sight, the costliest oblations of the wealthy; an evident intimation that it is not the amount given, but simply the proportion which the amount bears to the ability, which is considered and noted by Him, of whom poor and rich are alike stewards. If we were right in arguing that unfaithfulness in the least furnishes as correct an index of disposition and character as unfaithfulness in much, and that, therefore, in all justice, the same punishment might in both cases be awarded, we may safely argue, conversely, that faithfulness in the least is as good evidence of character as faithfulness in the much, so that mercy cannot be said to interfere with equity, if, in each case, the same eternal recompense be bestowed. If justice, untempered with mercy, might, in the one instance, inflict the same penalty, it must be justice uncompromised with mercy, which, in the other, allots the same reward. And we know of no appointment which can more tend to reconcile us to the inequalities of human condition, than that thus announced by our Savior: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much." You are all aware that one of the main arguments by which natural religion substantiates the truth of a judgment to come, is fetched from the frequent depression of virtue, and the triumph of wickedness; from those manifest diversities and incongruities which deform the present state, and which seem to pro-

claim that there must yet come a season of adjustment and of retribution. And it is a reasoning not easily invalidated, that the Righteous Moral Governor must have designed our re-appearance in another state of being, since good and evil are here unequally distributed, and with so little regard, as it seems, to character, that the government of God would contradict His nature if it terminated with the present dispensation. But when you have ceased to wonder at the inequalities of human condition, because persuaded that we are as yet only in an interlocutory state, there are questions which may press on us of singular interest, with regard to that judgment, of whose certainty they are witnesses. If, for example, the judgment is to demonstrate the impartiality of God, if its allotments are to make it evident that He has dealt with all men without respect of persons, it is difficult to understand how this can be effected, seeing that powers and opportunities for preparation have been so various, that one man appears to have been situated a hundred fold more advantageously than another for escaping the punishment and securing the reward. According to the representations furnished us by the Scriptures, the recompense of the future is proportioned to what men have done for God whilst on earth. But some have been so much better circumstanced than others for doing God service, that it seems as though it were impossible that thorough impartiality should at last be demonstrated. If we take the singular but majestic sketch of the judgment drawn by Christ himself, shortly before his crucifixion, we find that the acquittal or the condemnation is made to turn merely upon the having been beneficent, upon having fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and visited the sick. But this is like putting the acquittal within the reach of none but the rich, none at least but those who have more than sufficient for themselves, an overplus with which to be charitable. What is the poor man to do? the individual who is forced to appeal to the bounty of others, and is wholly without the power of being a benefactor himself? Is his poverty to incapacitate him for passing the last trial? Is the wealth of

another man to give so mighty a superiority that hereafter, as well as here, riches will secure him the ascendancy? Indeed this were so to perpetuate into futurity the distinctions of the present, that the last judgment, in place of adjusting the discrepancies which now throw suspicion on the moral government of God, would but make hopeless the solution of what is intricate and perplexed. Yet is it not certain that some men, through no fault of their own, but simply through the Divine arrangements, are so situated, so endowed, that they cannot do what others do in offices of zeal and benevolence, and that, therefore, they must stand lower amongst the candidates for eternity, than had their station on earth or power been different. Oh, not so! It is here that the principle of the text comes beautifully into operation, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much." We concede, of course, that one man *can* do far more than another, if there be a great difference in the means of usefulness respectively possessed. But it does not follow, whatever their means, that the one *will* do more than the other, in proportion to his ability; and if God is pleased to take his estimate from the proportion which what is done bears to the power of doing, there is an end at once to all necessary superiority on the side of those who have the pre-eminence in wealth, rank, and talent. The proportion may be as great, or even greater, in the instance of the poor, or the despised, or the illiterate man, than in that of another who has all the advantages in which the first is deficient, and, therefore, may the greater recompense be gained where, on all human calculation, there was the least power of giving. Will you tell me that poverty, because it incapacitates a man from being a giver, must, therefore, incapacitate him for all those acts of benevolence which are mentioned by Christ as the criterion of character? We deny it altogether. We contend that the poorest may be charitable, as well as the richest. What though he have not even the widow's two mites to bestow? What though he be actually dependant upon the bounty of others? Nevertheless he may, by his rigid carefulness, and in taking as little as possible from

the charitable, leave as much as possible to be bestowed on his companions in misery, and thus does he contribute to their relief precisely that amount, which, had he been less conscientious and less thrifty, he would have required for himself. This is just the extreme case, the case of the actual beggar; and this beggar may rob other beggars by wringing from the benevolent more than his own necessities positively demand, or he may contribute to other beggars by accepting from the benevolent only what will just suffice to keep him from starvation. He is "faithful in the least," if he draw as little as possible on the funds of benevolence; and thus his faithfulness in the least having involved a much harder sacrifice than that of many others in the much, may place him far above the stewards who have had to administer, and have administered well, the largest revenues of opulence. There can be no greater mistake than the imagining that God has done the poor man such injustice as to allow the rich to monopolize the power of being charitable. I do not know the man so poor that he may not give to others. He may give by taking less from the benevolent than they are ready to bestow, and by thus leaving them more to bestow in other quarters.

And, we nothing doubt, that many a poor man, who has always been striving to scrape together as much as was possible from the charitable, never reckoning that he had enough, if more were to be had—that he will be as truly convicted at the judgment of having defrauded the perishing, and wronged the friendless, as the wealthy proprietor who has squandered his substance on luxury, and closed his ear to the cry of the destitute. In this manner it is that, in the case of many, there is as much scope for unfaithfulness with small means, as with large; and that therefore, the poorest may place himself on a footing with the richest, when the two come to the judgment, as stewards of God's gifts. It is the same in every other case. The man who has but the smallest opportunities of instruction, may improve those opportunities with as much of earnestness and diligence as another who has the largest. There will be a great difference in



the knowledge of the two, but none in the faithfulness; and a gracious God, who judges according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not, may look with equal favor on both. And O, we do think this one of the most beautiful of the arrangements in the dispensation beneath which we live! We cannot receive from God so little of present advantage as not to have enough to enable us to attain the very noblest of the future. We care not how different may be the condition of those whom we address—high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, we regard them all as candidates for the same prizes, all as having it equally in their power, not only to enter heaven, but to reach eminence in that kingdom. The distinctions of earth are evanescent, and have nothing to correspond with them in that state of being. Indeed, those who have had present advantages, will have more to answer for; for the possession of those advantages implies accountableness, but their non-possession entails no disability in regard to striving for the rewards of eternity. We carry onwards our thoughts to the last dread assize, when, throned in clouds, the Judge of quick and dead shall summon all to His bar. Ministers and people, masters and servants, all shall stand together—all be brought to a strict reckoning for their respective talents and opportunities; and, if all are accepted through the merits of Christ, the minister will not necessarily be placed higher than the people, though his occupation, whilst on earth, was holier, and more intimate with Deity; neither will masters and servants be necessarily separated because they moved during life in widely different spheres, each in his own place may have done his utmost for God, and hereafter, in thorough consistency with His every attribute, may God assign to each the same recompense. In this way it is that Christianity, though vehemently opposed to all those levelling theories which disaffected men industriously broach, place the highest and the lowest on a par in the competition for eternity. Christianity is the best upholder of those distinctions in society, teaching that there is no more direct rebellion against the Creator than resistance to

any constituted authority, or the endeavor to bring round that boasted equality in which all shall have the same rights, or, more truly, in which none shall have any. But, nevertheless, if Christianity make it sinful to repine against servitude, it gives dignity to servitude, which would show the repining unreasonable, if it had not been made sinful. It tells every servant that, if he be faithful in his calling, he may rank with his master hereafter, even though the employment of the master have been exclusively the advancing of Christ's cause on earth. O it should be a surprisingly cheering thing to those who have to wear away life in the meanest occupation, that, as immortal beings, they are not one jot disadvantaged by their temporal position, but may make as much progress in the Christian race as though placed on the very summit in Christian office. Ay, and the cottager, who never is heard of beyond his own petty village, and whose only business in life is with the spade and the plough; and the artizan, who, week after week, must pursue the same dull routine, turning the wheel or throwing the shuttle; and the servant, whose days are consumed in the drudgery of servitude—there is not one of these who need look with discontent on the missionary, before whom idolatry is quailing, or the philanthropist, whose charities spread happiness through a parish. The inmates of the cottage, or the manufactory, or the kitchen, are the rivals of the missionary and the philanthropist for the prizes of heaven; and, when the throne is set, and the books are opened, all may receive the same crown, or that on the head of the mean man may even outshine that which the distinguished man wears.

O that God might grant to all of us so to use the present world as not to abuse it; so to pass through things temporal as that we finally lose not things eternal; and if we have much, whether of wealth, or of talent, or of privilege, that we may labor to be faithful, knowing that the much not improved must entail an immensity of wretchedness, and that, if we have little, we may labor equally to be faithful, knowing that a little well improved shall assure an immensity of happiness.





# SERMONS

ON CERTAIN OF

THE LESS PROMINENT

FACTS AND REFERENCES IN SACRED STORY.

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# SERMON I.

## THE FAITH OF JOSEPH ON HIS DEATH-BED.

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones.”—Hebrews, 11 : 22.

We have often occasion to point out to you what a difference there is in the standards by which God and men judge the relative worth or importance of things. In one great sense, indeed, there cannot be to God any of those distinctions which exist to ourselves; for, wondrously exalted as He is, things must be equal in his sight, which differ in ours in many respects and degrees. It is undoubtedly to forget the immeasurable distance of the Creator from the creature, to imagine that He who sitteth in the heavens, swaying the universal sceptre, regards as great, and as small, just what are reckoned such in our feeble computations. There ought to be nothing clearer than this—if our great and our small were great and small to God, God would be little more than one of ourselves, judging by the same measures, and therefore possessing only the same faculties.

Yet, though the distinctions made by God must not be thought the same with those made by man, we are not to conclude that God admits no differences where differences are supposed by ourselves. We are evidently in error, if we think that what is great to us must be great to God, and that what is small to us must be small to God: but it is not necessary, in order to the avoiding this error, that we should confound great and small, or compute that in God's sight they must be actually the same. They may not be the same; they may be widely separated: and yet none of them may be great to God, none of them small: whilst, moreover, the Divine estimate may be the reverse of the human, great and small chang-

ing places, so far as difference is allowed between the two.

It is this latter fact on which we now chiefly wish to fix your attention. Take, for example, our sins. We deny that there can be such a thing as a sin which is small in God's sight; forasmuch as sin, from its very nature, must be of infinite guilt, because committed against an infinite Being. But this is not saying that there are no degrees in sin, as though God regarded all crimes as of equal enormity. One sin may be greater than another in the Divine estimate, as well as in the human; and yet God may account no sin small, however ready we may be to think this or that inconsiderable. And what we are disposed to reckon trifling, may be precisely that to which God would attach the greater criminality; so that, as we have said, great and small may change places, and where both God and man admit a difference, you may have to reverse the judgment of the one to find that of the other. Sins of the mind, for instance, are ordinarily thought less of than sins of the flesh; pride incurs but slight reproof, whilst sensuality is heavily denounced. Yet the proud, perhaps, offers a more direct insult to God, and more invades his prerogative, than the sensual; and thus his offence may be the more hateful of the two in the sight of the Creator, whilst it receives, comparatively, no blame from the creature. Accordingly, there is nothing of which God speaks with greater loathing than of pride: the proud man is represented as the object of his special aversion. “God resisteth the proud.” So that

whilst with ourselves he puts a difference between sins, he inverts our decision, and assigns the greater atrociousness where we assign the less. Take, again, covetousness and drunkenness: these sins are neither thought by men, nor represented in Scripture, as of equal enormity. But which do men think the worse? The covetous man escapes with scarce a censure; the drunkard is the object of scorn and reprobation. But is this verdict ratified by the Bible? Nay, whilst the drunkard is unreservedly told that his sin shall exclude him from the kingdom of heaven, the covetous man is identified with the idolater. No one who remembers what idolatry is, and how God denounces the worshipper of images, will hesitate to admit that such a representation places covetousness at the very top of things offensive to our Maker. How careful, then, ought we to be as to what standards we adopt, when we would estimate the relative guiltiness of sins! If we must distinguish sin from sin—though it were perhaps safer to confine ourselves to the truth, that all sin is infinitely heinous—let us take good heed that we always go for our rule to the Divine word, and not to human opinion.

And much the same may be said in regard of duties, and of actions which God may graciously be pleased to approve. It is not to be thought, that because no human action can deserve reward from God, all actions performed in his service must be of equal account. With virtues, as with vices, God may acknowledge great differences: He will not overlook, as too small for notice, the cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple; but he does not necessarily put this act of benevolence on a level with every other achievement of faith and of love. Yet here we have the same remark to make as with reference to sins. The Divine decision will, in many cases, be wholly different from the human; whilst actions are classified by the one as well as by the other, the superiority may be assigned in a contrary order. The act of righteousness, which we should select as most worthy of commendation, and most demonstrative of piety of heart, may not be that on which the Almighty would fix, when signifying his ap-

proval of one of his servants. It may rather be, that some sacrifice which the world never knew, some exertion which was limited to his own home, and perhaps even his own heart, has been the most approved thing in the sight of the Lord, of all wrought by one whose time, and substance, and strength, have been wholly devoted to the cause of religion. It may not be when, like Paul, he is fighting "with beasts at Ephesus;" nor when, like Stephen, he is laying down his life for the truth, that a man of God does what specially draws on him the smile of his Maker. There may have been quiet and unobserved moments, moments spent in solitude and prayer, in which he has fought what God accounted a harder battle, and won a nobler victory. And in the arrangements of his household, in meeting some domestic trial, in subduing some unruly passion, he may virtually have displayed a stronger trust, and a simpler preference of the promises of the Most High, than when he has stood forth as the champion and confessor, amid all the excitement of a public scene, and gained for himself a deathless renown. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth:" and mightily should it console those who are not so circumstanced as to have great opportunity of making efforts and sacrifices on behalf of Christ and his cause, that it is not necessarily the martyr whose self-surrender is most accepted of God, nor the missionary whose labors and endurances are most held in remembrance; but that the private christian, in his struggles with himself, in his mortification of his passions, in the management of his family, in his patience under daily troubles, in his meek longings for a brighter world, may be yet dearer to his Father in heaven, and be thought to have shown more of faith, than many a man who has entered boldly the desert of heathenism with the cross in his hand, or even ascended the scaffold to seal with his blood his confession of Christ.

Now all these remarks on the different standards by which God and man judge actions, will be found to bear directly on the words of our text. In this 11th chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul collects from the histories of patriarchs, and other worthies, instances and examples of the



power of faith. And the question, in reference to our foregoing remarks, is, whether he has fixed upon those which we should have fixed upon ourselves. Inspired as the Apostle was, so that he must have been directed to facts most worthy of commemoration, we may not doubt that what he takes to show the faith of any one of the patriarchs, must be at least as strong an instance as his history contains. And if the instance selected by the Apostle be not that which we should have selected ourselves—if there be any other which we should have decidedly preferred—it is evident that our judgment differs from that of God; so that we have precisely the case on which we have been speaking, the case in which what man would account best is not so accounted by Him who readeth the heart. But this, we suspect, is exactly what may be alleged in regard of our text. We give you the history of Joseph, a history more than commonly eventful, and which is narrated in Scripture with special minuteness. We set you down to the examining this history, in order that you may take out of it the incident, or the action, which shall most clearly demonstrate that Joseph had faith in God, and that this faith was a principle of great energy and strength. Do you think that you would make the same selection as St. Paul makes in our text? passing over all the trials of Joseph; all the afflictions which he bravely and meekly endured; his confidence in his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, though on the truth of that interpretation depended his credit, and even his life; his eagerness to receive his father and brethren into the land, though every shepherd was "an abomination unto the Egyptians," and they were but likely to lower him in the general esteem—passing over, we say, all this, and having literally nothing to commemorate of Joseph, save that, when he was dying, he "made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones." Would this, we ask, have been the fact on which an uninspired writer would have fastened, when choosing from the history of Joseph what might best illustrate the Patriarch's faith in God? Hardly, we think,—and if not, then you have a

clear exemplification of the truth on which we have endeavored to insist, that the actions which seem to men most conclusive, as evidences of righteousness of character, may not, after all, be those to which God would attach most worth and importance.

It is one thing, however, to allow that the selected proof is not that on which we ourselves should have fixed, and quite another to conclude, that, when pointed out, we cannot see its force. We may believe that you all concur with us in the opinion, that had an uninspired writer had to choose the best proof of faith from the history of Joseph, he would not have chosen that selected by St. Paul. But, nevertheless, we may be able to determine that the proof is a strong proof: if we cannot show it to be the strongest which the history furnishes, we may at least ascertain that it establishes the power of the principle which it is quoted to illustrate. This then it is which we must propose as our object through the remainder of our discourse. We have already drawn one valuable inference from the text, in that, through showing that God and men do not always judge alike in regard of righteous acts, it teaches us that the obscure individual, and the unnoticed deed, may be more approved above than the conspicuous leader, and the dazzling performance. But we have now to examine whether that for which Joseph stands commemorated by St. Paul, did not strikingly demonstrate his faith. We put out of sight the surprising and varied occurrences of the patriarch's life; and, standing round his death-bed, we will simply consider whether he did not display extraordinary faith, as we hear him make "mention of the departing of the children of Israel," and give "commandment concerning his bones."

Now who amongst you is unaware of the power which prosperity has of attaching men to earth? of the unwillingness felt by those who have every gratification within reach, to submit to any change, or even to contemplate its possibility? It is not necessary, in order to this consciousness, that you should yourselves abound in what the world has to offer, for then there would be comparatively few to whose feelings we might venture to appeal. But you

are all judges as to the tendencies of our nature, when acted on by certain causes and circumstances; and you may all therefore decide, from what you have experienced in yourselves, whether, in proportion as temporal advantages accumulate, man is not disposed to settle himself below, and to prefer the present to the future. If I were looking out for strong proof of the power of faith, of faith as dictating that eternal and invisible things be preferred to temporal and visible, I certainly should not go to the hovel, whose wretched inmate has scarce sufficient for subsistence; I should rather turn to the palace where gorgeousness reigns, and all that our nature can desire is lavishly spread. It is not but that the inmate of the hovel has a wide field for the exercise of faith, a far wider, in some respects, than the owner of the palace; but in the particular respect of a preference of the future to the present, of a readiness to give up the visible on the strength of a promise of God which refers to the invisible, the trial of faith is evidently with the man of abundance, rather than with him whose whole life is a series of struggles. The pauper may be said to have nothing to leave; there is nothing in his portion which can come, even in appearance, into competition with what is promised by God; whereas the noble has to separate from all that is most attractive in this lower creation, and to exchange a felt good for an unseen and untried. And, therefore, if we found the noble quite indifferent to what he had to abandon, so possessed with a persuasion of the immeasurably greater worth of invisible things, that he was all eagerness to enter on their enjoyment, we should say that here had faith won one of the finest of its triumphs, and that perhaps no where could its display be more conspicuous or convincing.

But it is something of this kind of display which is furnished by the death-bed of Joseph. We do not precisely mean to speak of this death-bed, as though it presented the same facts as that of a Christian, who, with his eye firmly fixed on the glories of heaven, is almost impatient to break away from the possessions of earth. Joseph lived when there were yet but dim no-

tices of a world beyond the grave, and we may not too confidently assume his acquaintance with a state of everlasting happiness. But there was every thing to make Joseph desire the settling his children and brethren permanently in Egypt; so that he had somewhat of the same difficulty to overcome in contemplating their removal, as the man who has to resign great present advantages, that he may enter on those promised in another state of being. The scene indeed soon changed: there arose another king "who knew not Joseph," and oppression weighed down the children of Israel. Had this change occurred before Joseph died, there would have been comparatively nothing striking in his making mention of the departure of his posterity, and showing that it occupied his last thoughts upon earth. It would then have been quite natural that he should have desired this departure, and pointed out, with his dying breath, the promise which ensured it, as the most precious of the legacies which he had to bequeath.

But when Joseph died, he was at the very summit of prosperity, scarcely second to the monarch on the throne, with a vast inheritance of honor and wealth to transmit to his children. He had, moreover, established his brethren in the land; so that he, who had been brought into Egypt a captive and an exile, saw himself at the head of a numerous tribe, which seemed growing to a power which scarce another could rival. I know what, in such a case, would have been the dictate of human policy and ambition. I know what the dying man would have said, had he known nothing, or thought nothing, of the declarations of God, in respect of his family. He would have advised that the colony so successfully planted, should studiously avoid the uprooting itself from so congenial a soil, and take all possible pains to deepen and strengthen its hold. He would have contrasted the mean estate of his race, whilst they sojourned in Canaan, with the wealth and greatness acquired in Egypt, and have argued, from the comparison, that the true wisdom would be to remain where they were, rather than to return to the home of their fathers. You have only to think of



Joseph as having risen from the lowest to the highest condition; as the founder, to all appearance, of a mighty dynasty, of a family possessed of almost regal power; and you will readily admit that the thoughts most likely to have occupied his mind were thoughts of the future fortunes of his house, fortunes of which he might augur well if his children continued in Egypt, but which would be altogether perilled by their quitting that country.

And had there not been a higher principle in Joseph than that of worldly policy or ambition; had he been merely a leader who sought aggrandizement and distinction for himself and his posterity; it is not credible that his dying words would have been those which were calculated to unsettle his tribe, and to lead their thoughts from the land where they were most likely to be great. For Joseph might, at the least, have kept silence in regard of the predicted change of residence: if, with the consciousness that God had spoken of a going back to Canaan, he could not have distinctly advised the settling in Egypt, yet whilst there seemed so much to recommend the remaining where they were, he might have abstained from speaking to his children of their being removed.

But Joseph was something more than the founder of a powerful line; and the feelings which actuated him were not those of policy and ambition. Joseph was a man who feared the Lord, and with whom the word of the Most High prevailed against all dictates of carnal wisdom or desire. It was nothing to Joseph that he had wonderfully attained to lordship over Egypt, and that now, in quitting the world, he seemed to have that lordship to hand down to his children. He knew that God had revealed to his fathers a purpose of giving another land to them and to their seed; and that it was not in Egypt, fair and fertile though it was, that he designed to carry on the mysterious dispensation which should issue in the redemption of the world. And therefore were Joseph's thoughts on Canaan rather than on Egypt; on Canaan, in which as yet his family possessed nothing but a burial-place, rather than on Egypt, where already

they were masters of houses and lands. Oh, my brethren, before you pronounce that there was no great trial or display of faith, in Joseph's making mention, under such circumstances, of the departure of the Israelites, consider the difficulty, experienced by yourselves, in preferring what is future to what is present, in giving up a good, of which you have the possession, for another of which you have only the promise. For it was this which Joseph had to do; and that, moreover, at the least in as great a degree as is ever imposed upon us. You know very well that you find it hard to make up the mind to a separation from objects, sought perhaps with eagerness, and obtained with difficulty; though you profess to believe, that, on passing away from earthly possessions, you are to enter upon others a thousandfold more desirable. And you would perhaps find it yet harder, to make distinct arrangements for the destruction of the fabric which your whole life had been occupied in perfecting, and which, after long trial and struggle, seemed complete in every part, just because there was a saying, referring to a yet remote time, which seemed to pledge God to the building up that fabric in some remote place.

But this was exactly the task assigned to Joseph on his death-bed; and the more you suppose that the patriarch had but little knowledge of heaven and its joys, the more surprising do you make it, that he should have endangered, on the strength of the Divine word, the temporal prosperity of his tribe. For, where eternal sanctions were but dimly revealed, temporal considerations must have had great weight; and the dying leader, who could hardly speak of afflictions as leading to glory, would be strongly moved to the hiding afflictions, to the leaving them, at least, to be found out by experience. But Joseph was too much penetrated by confidence in the declaration of God, to allow of his conferring with flesh and blood, or being deterred by probable consequences. It is a fine, a noble scene, which is brought before us by the simple record of the historian; and I call upon you to behold it, that you may learn what faith can do against the promptings of nature, the sugges-

tions of suspicion, and the dictates of pride. I know what would be likely to be the uppermost feelings in that expiring man, who, amid all the insignia of authority and wealth, is bidding farewell to brethren and children. I know what he might be expected to do and to say. His wasted features might be lit up with a smile of exultation, as he surveyed the tokens of almost regal state; and he might say to those around, "Behold the glory to which I have raised you, and which I bequeath to you and your posterity. It will be your own fault if this glory decay: the best of all Egypt is yours, if you do not, through indolence or love of change, suffer that it be wrested from your hold. I have made, I leave you great—great, as chieftains in an adopted country, forsake not that country, and your greatness may be as permanent as it is dazzling." But nothing of this kind proceeds from the dying man's lips. He speaks only of the abandonment of all the glory and greatness; of an abandonment which might perhaps not be distant; for he gives directions as to his burial in some unpossessed land. Interpret or paraphrase his last words, and they are as though he had said, "Children and brethren, be not deceived by your present prosperity; this is not your home; it is not here, notwithstanding the appearances, that God wills to separate and consecrate you to himself. Ye are the descendants of Abraham; and Egypt, with its idols, is no resting-place for such. Ye must be ever on the alert, expecting the signal of departure from a land, whose treasures and glories are but likely to detain you from the high calling designed for you by God. Settle not then yourselves, but be ye always as strangers; strangers where you seem firmly established, and where, by a marvellous concurrence of events, you have risen to dominion."

Such, we say, are virtually the utterances of the expiring patriarch. And when thou think that, by these utterances, he was taking the most effectual way of destroying the structure so surprisingly reared, and on which it were incredible that he did not himself gaze with amazement and delight; that he was detaching those whom he loved from all which, on human calculation,

was most fitted to uphold them in glory and power—oh, you may tell me of other demonstrations and workings of that principle, by which servants of the Lord have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions;" but I can see that nothing short of this principle, ay, and of this principle in a very high degree, could have moved the dying man to such words as he spoke; and I assent, in all its breadth, to the statement of St. Paul, that it was "by faith" that "Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel."

But we have not yet spoken of Joseph's giving "commandment concerning his bones;" and this is far too memorable a circumstance to be passed over without special comment. We must refer to the Book of Genesis, in order to see what the commandment was. There you read, "And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." The oath was remembered and kept; for it is expressly recorded, in the account of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." Neither were these bones neglected in the wilderness: they must have been religiously preserved during all the wanderings of the people; for you read in the Book of Joshua, "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem."

It appears from these historical notices, when joined with the reference made by St. Paul in our text, that great importance is attached by inspired writers to the fact of Joseph's giving commandment concerning his bones. And the fact certainly deserves the being carefully pondered, though you may have been used to pass it over with but little attention. It would seem that Joseph was never buried in Egypt; for, after mentioning the oath which he took of his brethren, the Book of Genesis concludes with saying, "So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." When you connect this statement with his dying injunction, and with the fact,



that, though the Israelites were thrust out in haste from the land, they carried with them the remains of the patriarch, you can hardly doubt that the body of Joseph, when embalmed, was kept unburied amongst his people, and that its being so kept was included in his parting injunction. And this is the more remarkable, inasmuch as no reason can be given why Joseph, had he wished it, might not at once have been buried in Canaan. When one reads of his giving "commandment concerning his bones," the obvious feeling is, that, with that desire which seems instinctive to man, the desire that our dust should mingle with that of those whom we have loved and lost, Joseph gave directions for his being laid in the same grave with his father and mother. But, had this been all, why was not his body at once carried into Canaan? When Jacob died, "all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house," went up, and interred him, according to his wish, "in the cave of the field of Machpelah." So vast was the funeral pomp, that, "when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond Jordan." Surely, if such were the interment of Jacob, that of Joseph would not have been less honored: had he commanded his brethren, as he had been commanded by his father, "In my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me," we may not doubt that the Egyptians would not only have permitted the funeral, but have graced his obsequies with all that could give splendor to death.

It follows, therefore, that it was not merely interment in Canaan which Joseph desired: it was expressly his wish, that the interment should be deferred until the children of Israel departed from Egypt, and that then should his bones be carried up to the land which had been promised to Abraham. In short, the "commandment concerning his bones," which St. Paul adduces in proof of Joseph's faith, would seem to

have been a commandment that his bones should lie unburied whilst the Israelites were in Egypt, and be buried when they took possession of Canaan. But what was there in this which specially proved faith? What evidence does the commandment which Joseph gave "concerning his bones," add to that furnished by the mention which he made "of the departing of the children of Israel?" Here is a point worthy of all your attention, though there will be no great difficulty in finding a satisfactory answer.

Why, think ye, did Joseph wish to lie unburied in the midst of his people, except that his bones might perpetually preach to them, that Egypt was not to be their home, but must be abandoned for Canaan? The very lesson which, with his dying breath, he labored to enforce—the lesson, that they were to be expecting to depart from the country which had received and sustained them, this lesson he longed to enforce after death, knowing, as he did, that his brethren and children would be likely to forget it. But how shall he accomplish this? What means are in his power of continuing to preach a great truth, when he shall have been actually withdrawn out of life? Let his bones lie unburied, unburied because they wait the being carried up to Canaan, and will there not be an abiding memento to the Israelites, a standing remembrancer, that, sooner or later, the Lord will effect their removal, and transplant them to the land which He promised to their fathers? It is in this way that we interpret the commandment of Joseph. You have heard of the preaching of a spectre: the spirit that passed before the face of Eliphaz, and caused the hair of his flesh to stand up, came from the invisible world to give emphasis, as well as utterance, to the question, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more just than his Maker?" And here you have, not the preaching of a spectre, but the preaching of a skeleton: the bones of Joseph are converted into an orator, and make "mention of the departing of the children of Israel." The patriarch could no longer warn and command his brethren and descendants with the voice of a living man: his tongue was mute in death:

but there was eloquence in his sepulchred limbs. Wherefore had he not been gathered to his fathers? what meant this strange spectacle in the midst of a people, the spectacle of a corpse to which a grave seemed denied, and which was kept, as though by some wild mysterious spell, from going down with others to the chambers of death? It was a dead thing, which nevertheless appeared reluctant to die: it seemed to haunt the earth in its lifelessness, as though it had not finished the office for which it had been born, as though it had yet some awful duty to perform, ere it could be suffered to mingle quietly with the dust whence it sprung. And since it could not fail to be known for what purpose the body of one, so honored and revered, lay unburied year after year—even for that of being removed by the Israelites, when God should visit them, and transplant them from Egypt,—did not Joseph's bones perpetually repeat his dying utterances! and could any thing better have been devised to keep up the remembrance of what his last words had taught, than this his subsistence as a skeleton, when he had long ceased to be numbered with the living?

There can hardly then be two opinions, that the bones of Joseph, thus reserved for interment in Canaan, became virtually a preacher to the people of the very truth which he had died in the effort to enforce. But what additional evidence of his faith was there in his giving "commandment concerning his bones?" The very greatest. It is one thing to preach a doctrine during life: it is another to be eager to preach it after death. See ye not this? see ye not that the faith, which might be strong enough to urge to the advocacy of an opinion now, might not be strong enough to urge to the taking measures for its advocacy a hundred years hence? A man might have his misgivings: he might say to himself, "Perhaps, when I am dead, something will arise to prove me in the wrong; why then should I strive to keep the opinion from being forgotten, when events will have transpired to show it erroneous? If the opinion be true, others will arise to maintain it; if false, why should my belief in it be made,

through mine own act, to survive its being exploded? Better surely for me to teach what I think true whilst I live, but not to stake my credit, when dead, on propositions which time may disprove."

We are thus persuaded, that, if you consider attentively, you cannot fail to allow it a strong additional evidence of a man's belief in a tenet, when, over and above proclaiming it whilst he lives, he labors to bring about that he may proclaim it when dead. I would preach, if I might, after death. I would not be silent, if I knew how to speak, when the grave shall have received me, and another shall stand to minister in my place. I would still repeat the truths which I now strive habitually to press on men's attention. But why? Because I am confident of their being truths: because I have no misgivings; because I have not even the shadow of a suspicion, that, happen what may, Christianity can be proved false, and the Bible a fiction. If I had, I should be proportionally reluctant to the preaching after death; my anxiety to utter truth would make me shrink from the possibility of being found hereafter giving utterance to falsehood."

And to show this more clearly by a particular instance, which shall be nearly parallel to that in our text. There are declarations in the Bible, that the Lord, whom the heavens have received, shall come forth personally, in glory and great majesty, and revisit this earth to claim its dominion. There are also predictions as to the time of this splendid manifestation, though not so explicit but that men may widely differ as to when it shall be. Suppose that by the study of unfulfilled prophecy, I satisfy myself as to the date of Christ's coming, fixing it to seventy, or eighty, or a hundred years hence. Suppose that, so long as I live, I keep asserting to you this date, you will conclude that I believe it myself. Suppose that, when I come to die, I gather you around me, and solemnly declare that at the said time the Lord will reappear, you will be more than ever convinced of my belief: dying men have little interest in deceiving; and though you may not be a jot the more persuaded that my opinion is true, there will be scarcely room for doubt



as to my sincerity in holding it. But suppose something more: suppose that, as I die, I give directions for the erecting of a monument, to be reared in the very scene of my labors, and inscribed with the very date on which I had so resolutely fixed. I should thus be taking all possible pains to keep my opinion before your eyes, and those of your children; to keep it, when things might have occurred to prove it false, when it might be nothing but a register of my ignorance and mistake: and would not this be the crowning, the insurpassable evidence of the strength of my faith? if I had the slightest suspicion, or fear, that the event might prove me wrong, would I ever take measures for identifying my name with error and delusion?

And this just illustrates the case of Joseph's giving "commandment concerning his bones." There was no proof, in his giving this commandment, that the children of Israel would depart out of Egypt, even as there would be none in my directions for a monument, that the Redeemer would appear at the specified time. But there was a very strong proof, that Joseph believed that the Israelites would depart out of Egypt, just as there would be that I believed that Christ would come on the day which I had named. And it is simply in illustration of the power of Joseph's faith, that St. Paul quotes his giving "commandment concerning his bones." The illustration is therefore most appropriate. There were long years—as probably Joseph was aware—years of wo and oppression, to pass over Israel ere there would come that visitation of the Lord, which his dying words affirmed. And during this dreary period it would seem to the Israelites as though they were forgotten of their God, as though his promise had come utterly to an end, and they were doomed to remain in the house of bondage for ever. What, then, more likely than that whatever reminded them of the alleged purpose of God would be treated by them with loathing and scorn; and that, whether it were the dead or the living who predicted their departure, the mention would excite only hatred and derision? Yet Joseph was not to be moved by any of this likelihood. Why not? Be-

cause his faith was too strong: he was too confident in God's word to allow of his taking into account the possibility of its failure. And therefore he did not hesitate to convert his bones into a perpetual preacher, or monument, of that word. "I shall not leave you," he seems to say to his weeping kinsmen. "I die; but this worn body has a high duty to accomplish, ere it may enjoy the still slumber of the grave. I leave it to preach to you that God will yet bring you up from Egypt 'with a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm.' You, or your children, may be disposed to insult my remains, when oppression shall grow, and deliverance be deferred. But I know how all this will terminate. Mine eye, over which the film of death is fast gathering, is on a mighty procession, the procession of thousands, and tens of thousands, marching to the inheritance which God promised unto Abraham; and in the midst of this procession shall these bones be triumphantly carried, their office done, to share with you the land of Canaan." Oh! who can fail to see that Joseph thus furnished a far stronger proof of trust in God's word than is found in his mere assertion of what that word declared? Who can deny that St. Paul added vastly to the illustration of the power of faith, when, after stating that "by faith" Joseph, when he died, "made mention of the departing of the children of Israel," he subjoined, "and gave commandment concerning his bones?"

But we ought not to fail to observe, before we quit the death-bed of Joseph, that, forasmuch as unquestionably the Spirit of God actuated the expiring patriarch, and perhaps dictated his words, the commandment as to his bones may have been designed to intimate, or illustrate, the truth of a resurrection. If you suppose, as you reasonably may, that they who surrounded the dying man considered his utterances as suggested by God, you will believe that they pondered them as fraught with information, conveying, probably, notices upon points which had been but dimly, if at all, revealed. We need hardly observe to you, that, so far as the evidence of faith is concerned, it would be most conspicuous and convincing, on the supposition that Joseph

had respect to the resurrection of his body. It may have been so. Why was he unwilling that his bones should rest in Egypt? Unwilling he evidently was; for, allowing him to have desired their remaining unburied that they might remind the Israelites of their predicted departure, this is no reason why he should also have given directions for their being carried into Canaan. By remaining unburied he would have shown an anxiety to preach a great fact to his descendants; but, by further desiring that, when this office was done, he might be buried in the promised land, he evinced a care as to his place of sepulture, or showed that it was not indifferent to him what became of his body.

Wherefore, then, we again ask, was he unwilling to be buried in Egypt? What had he to do with choosing where his bones should be laid, and that, too, on a far distant day? I cannot but infer, from this anxiety of Joseph in regard to his grave, that he did not consider the body as a thing to be thrown aside so soon as the vital principle were extinct. He felt that his dead body might live to admonish his countrymen; but he must also have felt that, even when that office were done, it was not to be treated as of no further worth. It matters not whether it arise from a kind of natural instinct, or from the immediate suggestion of the Spirit of God—in all cases, care as to what becomes of the body, is evidence of a consciousness that the body is not finally to perish at death. He who shows anxiety as to the treatment of his remains shows something of a belief, whether he confess it or not, that these remains are reserved for other purposes and scenes. I can hardly think that Joseph believed that his body would never live again: he would scarcely have provided it a sepulchre in Canaan, if persuaded that, in dying, it would be finally destroyed. His bones might as well have rested in Egypt, amongst those of the idolater and stranger, had they never been appointed, or had he not imagined them appointed, to the being brought up from the dust and again sinewed with life. But on the supposition of a belief, or even the faintest conjecture, of a resurrection, we seem to understand why the dying patriarch

longed to sleep in the promised land. "I will not leave," he seems to say, "this body to be disregarded, and trampled on, as though it were merely that of an animal whose existence wholly terminates at death. That which God takes care of, reserving it for another life, it becomes not man to despise, as though undeserving a thought. And though the eye of the Almighty would be on my dust in Egypt, as in Canaan, yet would I rather rest with the righteous than with the wicked in the grave, with my fathers and my kinsmen, than with the foreigner and the enemy. If I am to start from long and dark slumber, let those who wake with me be those whom I have loved, and who are to share with me the unknown existence."

Such, we say, is an interpretation which might fairly be put on Joseph's giving "commandment concerning his bones." There may have floated before him visions of the grave giving up its dead. The yearnings of his parting spirit after Canaan; the longing for interment by the side of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; all may have risen from an indistinct thought that he was destined to live again; all may mark that, though life and immortality were not then brought to light, dim and spectral images flitted to and fro, shadowy forms, as of the decayed and the dead, mysteriously reconstructed and reanimated. And if they who stood around Joseph recognized, as they must have done in the last words of Jacob, the dictates of the Almighty himself, then may we say that the "commandment concerning his bones" amounted to a Divine intimation of the truth of a resurrection. Whatever showed that God willed that the dead body should be cared for, that he would not have it thrown aside as utterly done with, went also to the showing that the body was still to be of use, and that, therefore, its resurrection was designed. Hence, it may be that from the death-bed of Joseph sprang, in a measure, that persuasion of a resurrection, which gradually wrought itself into the creed of the children of Israel. His "commandment concerning his bones," kept so long in mind, and associated with a great crisis in the national history, may have produced attention, not only to



the departure from Egypt, but to a far mightier departure—the departure of myriads from the sepulchres of the earth, after long enthrallment under a sterner than Pharaoh. I feel as if it were to attach surprising interest to Joseph's last words, to suppose that they showed his own thought, and gave notice to others, of the resurrection of the body. This makes his death-bed that almost of a Christian. It is not a Christian thing, to die manifesting indifference as to what is done with the body. That body is redeemed: not a particle of its dust but was bought with drops of Christ's precious blood. That body is appointed to a glorious condition: not a particle of the corruptible but what shall put on incorruption; of the mortal that shall not assume immortality. The Christian knows this: it is not the part of a Christian to seem

unmindful of this. He may, therefore, as he departs, speak of the place where he would wish to be laid. "Let me sleep," he may say, "with my father and my mother, with my wife and my children: lay me not here, in this distant land, where my dust cannot mingle with its kindred. I would be chimed to my grave by my own village bell, and have my requiem sung where I was baptized into Christ." Marvel ye at such last words? Wonder ye that one, whose spirit is just entering the separate state, should have this care for the body which he is about to leave to the worms? Nay, he is a believer in Jesus as "the Resurrection and the Life:" this belief prompts his dying words; and it shall have to be said of him, as of Joseph, that "by faith," yea, "by faith," he "gave commandment concerning his bones."

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## SERMON II.

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### ANGELS AS REMEMBRANCERS.

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"He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words."—St. Luke, 24 : 6, 7, 8.

It was a saying of Luther, and one which is often quoted amongst ourselves, "that the doctrine of justification by faith is the doctrine of a standing or a falling church." The meaning of the saying is, that so vitally important, so essential to the very existence of a christian community, is the doctrine of justification by faith, that you may always judge whether a church is in a healthful or a declining condition, by the tenacity with which this doctrine is maintained, and the clearness with which it is expounded. We

have no wish to dispute the truth of the saying; for, beyond all question, there can be real christianity only where there is a distinct recognition of the fact, that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

But, nevertheless, if we were to fix on any one doctrine, as furnishing pre-eminently a test by which to try the condition of a church, we should be disposed to take that of spiritual influences, rather than that of justification by faith. We cannot but think that he who fails to recognize, in all its free-

ness, that we are "justified by faith," must first have failed to recognize, in all humility, that "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, as of ourselves." It would seem to follow, in natural consequence, from our fancying ourselves independent on supernatural teaching, that we should fancy ourselves capable, in a measure, of contributing to our justification; so that, at all events, he who practically forgets that the Holy Spirit can alone guide into truth, is likely to be soon landed in error on the fundamental points of a sinner's acceptance. And whether or not the doctrine of spiritual influences be the better test to apply, in attempting to determine the condition of a church, there can, at least, be no doubt that where piety is flourishing, this doctrine will be deeply cherished; where declining, comparatively neglected. The individual christian will "grow in grace," in proportion as he depends on the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and habituates himself to the turning to this divine agent for guidance, comfort, and instruction in righteousness. And any branch of the Catholic Church will, in like manner, be vigorous and fruitful, in proportion as it honors the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, distinctly recognizing that his influences alone can make the work of the Second effectual to salvation.

But when we speak of spiritual influence, we are far from wishing to confine the expression to the influences of the Holy Ghost, as though no other spiritual agency were brought to bear upon man. We desire to extend it to created, though invisible, beings—to angels, whether evil or good—believing, on the authority of Scripture, that there are such beings, and that they continually act on us by a secret, but most efficient, power. And where there is a tolerably distinct recognition of the person and office of the Holy Ghost, there may be a comparative forgetfulness, if not an actual denial, of angelic ministrations; and our conviction is, that much of comfort in religion is lost, and much of coldness produced, through the little heed given to spiritual influences, thus more largely understood. It will hardly be denied that the mass of christians think little, if at all, of

angels; that they regard them as beings so far removed from companionship with ourselves, that discourse on their nature and occupation must deserve the character of unprofitable speculation. If, then, the preacher take as his theme the burning spirits which surround God's throne, he will probably be considered as adventuring upon mysteries too high for research, whilst there is abundance of more practical topics on which he might enlarge.

Yet it cannot have been intended that we should thus remain ignorant of angels: it cannot be true that there is nothing to be ascertained in regard of these creatures, or nothing which it is for our instruction, or our comfort, to know. There is a petition in the Lord's prayer which should teach us better than this—"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." It must be specially by angels that God's will is done in heaven; and if we are directed to take the manner, or degree, in which angels do God's will, as measuring that in which we should desire its being done by men, surely it can neither be beyond our power to know any thing of angels, nor unimportant that we study to be wise up to what is written regarding them in the Bible. And, indeed, so far is Scripture from leaving angelic ministrations amongst obscure, or inscrutable, things, that it interweaves it with the most encouraging of its promises, and thus strives, as it were, to force it upon us as a practical and personal truth. Where is the christian that has not been gladdened by words such as these, "Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling?" But of those to whom these words speak cheerfully, how few, perhaps, give attention to the following verse, though evidently explanatory of the agency through which the promise shall be accomplished! "for he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

And it ought not to be overlooked, that, in proportion as we lose sight of the doctrine, that good angels are "ministering spirits," influencing us for righteousness, we are likely to forget the power of our great "adversary,



the devil," who, with the hosts under his guidance, continually labors at effecting our destruction. It can hardly be that they, who are keenly alive to their exposure to the assaults of malignant, but invisible, enemies, should be indifferent to the fact of their having on their side the armies of Heaven: good and evil spirits must be considered as antagonists in a struggle for ascendancy over man; and there is, therefore, more than a likelihood, that they who think little of their friends in so high a contest, will depreciate their foes, and thus more than ever expose themselves to their power.

We cannot, then, put from us the opinion that the doctrine of angelic ministrations hardly obtains its due share of attention, and that it ought to be pressed, with greater frequency and urgency, by the ministers of Christ, on those committed to their care. There is, indeed, a risk, that he who sets himself to discourse on those orders of intelligent being which stretch upwards between God and man, may indulge in fanciful speculation, and forget, amid the brilliancies opened up to his imagination, that he is bound exclusively to seek the profit of his hearers. But there is little fear of his passing the limits of what is sober and instructive, so long as he confines himself to what is written in Scripture, and fixes on certain prominent facts which lie beyond dispute, because explicitly revealed. It is this which we purpose doing in our present discourse. We wish, indeed, to impress upon you that a spiritual agency is ever at work on your behalf, understanding by spiritual agency not merely that of the Holy Ghost, to which every other must be necessarily subordinate, but that of those orders of being which are designated in Scripture by the general term "angels," and which kept their "first estate" when numbers of like nature with themselves were cast out from heaven as rebels against God. But, at the same time, we are very anxious to advance nothing which shall not have scriptural warrant for its truth, and which shall not, moreover, present something practical on which you may fasten. Let us see, then, whether the passage which we have taken as our text, will not enable us to illustrate,

thus soberly and profitably, the truth, that angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Now you will judge at once, from this introduction to our subject, that we do not purpose speaking on the fact of the resurrection of Christ, though this fact, as matter both of prophecy and history, seems exclusively treated of in the words of our text. What we want you to observe is, that these words were spoken by two angels, who appeared to the women that were early at the sepulchre; for, though it is said in the chapter before us, "two men stood by them in shining garments," you readily find, from a comparison of the Gospels, that the human form was here assumed by heavenly beings; that they were spirits who, in the likeness of flesh, accosted the women as they sought in vain for the body of Christ. It is not here to be proved that there are such beings as angels; neither have we to show that they are endowed with great might; for not only is St. Matthew's description of the apparition of the men, that "the angel of the Lord descended from heaven;" but he adds, that "his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." But assuming, as we safely may, the facts of the ministration and power of angels, there is something very remarkable in the circumstance that the angels, in the case now before us, reminded the women of something which had been said to them by Christ, and that, too, in a remote place, "whilst he was yet with them in Galilee." How came these angels to be so well acquainted with what had been said by Christ to the women? They speak of it with the greatest familiarity, as though they had themselves heard the prediction: they call it to the remembrance of the women, just as one of you might remind his neighbor, or friend, of parts of a sermon at whose delivery both had been present. We do not, indeed, profess to say that the angels might not have been distinctly informed as to what Christ had uttered in Galilee; that they might not have been instructed, by immediate revelation, as to

things which had passed when themselves were not present to see or to hear. But neither, on the other hand, can any one say that the angels did not gain their knowledge from having been actually amongst the audience of Christ; whilst the supposition of their having heard for themselves, agrees best with the tone of their address, and is certainly in keeping with other statements of Scripture.

For if we gather, from the familiar manner in which the angels quote Christ's sayings to the women, that they, as well as the women, had been present when those sayings were uttered, we only infer—what may be proved the doctrine of the Bible—that angels are actually, though invisibly, in the midst of our worshipping assemblies, witnesses of our department, and hearers of that Gospel to which, too often, we give so languid an attention. This would seem to be the doctrine of St. Paul, when he speaks to the Ephesians of the preaching of the Gospel, as “to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.” Here the Church, in and through her public ministrations, is represented as furnishing instruction to angelic orders of being, as though these lofty creatures came down to her solemn assemblies, not only as observers, but as seeking lessons for themselves in mysteries which, beforetime, they had vainly striven to explore. And when the same Apostle exhorts the Corinthian women to have a modest veil, or covering, over their heads, in their religious meetings, he persuades them by this very consideration, that they appeared in the presence of the angels—“because of the angels,”—and thus gives all the sanction of his authority to the opinion, that angels are amongst us when we gather together for public worship.

This, then, is the first conclusion, a conclusion borne out by other statements of Scripture, which we derive from the familiar acquaintance which the angels manifest with what Christ had said to the women in Galilee; namely, that angels are present when the Gospel is preached: angels had in all likelihood been present when the Redeemer announced his death and re-

surrection; and we may believe that, similarly, as the proclamation of redemption is now solemnly and statedly made, there are other auditors besides those whom our senses can discern; that, like the prophet's servant, we need only the purging and strengthening of our vision, and in addition to the breathing masses of our fellow-men, we should presently ascertain the place of our assembling to be thronged with burning forms, those stately intelligences which are “the ministers of God,” executing his will throughout his vast and replenished dominion. And we need hardly stay to point out to you what an additional solemnity this should cast over these our gatherings in the house of the Lord; for it must commend itself to you all, that the being actually under the observation of the heavenly hosts, the having in the midst of us, as inspectors of what passes, a multitude of glorious creatures, the cherubim and seraphim that are permitted to enter the immediate presence of God himself, should greatly tend to the banishing from amongst us all that is cold and frivolous and listless, and to the keeping us in that attitude of reverent attention which should be always assumed, yet is often wanting, where men profess to seek an audience of their Maker.

But we wish specially to impress upon you a purpose for which angels may be present at the preaching of the Gospel, and which may be taken as illustrating generally the nature of their ministrations on our behalf. We gather at once, from our Lord's parable of the sower, as expounded by Himself, that Satan busily endeavors to counteract the preaching of the Gospel; for it is said, in explanation of the seed sown by the way-side, “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.” There is no interpretation to be put upon this, save that the devil is ever watching the effect wrought by the delivery of the word, and that, with an earnestness only equalled by his malice, he labors to thwart it whenever it threatens to be injurious to his power. And if evil angels be thus present at the preaching of the Gospel,



in the hope of making it ineffectual, why should we doubt that good angels are present, to strive to gain it place, and give it impressiveness? Present, we have every assurance that they are; and if we consider that, throughout Scripture, good and evil angels are represented as engaged in a struggle, a struggle for ascendancy over man, we must believe that the efforts of the one are met by precisely antagonist efforts on the part of the others, every mine having its countermine; so that if they who are against us labor to catch away the word, they who are for us labor to imprint it, to procure for it a hold and grasp upon the hearers.

And this gives something of a practical and tangible character to that high contest which is going forwards between "principalities and powers." We need not lose ourselves in endeavoring to image the shock of spiritual intelligences, meeting on some field of far-distant space, with all the emblazonry of celestial pomp, and in all the terribleness of super-human strength. It may be thus that poetry loves to dwell on the battles of angels; but theology has rather to do away with this martial magnificence, to carry the war into the narrow domain of a single human heart, and there to give it the character of a moral conflict, a struggle between principles, supported and pressed by the opposite parties which appear as combatants, and engage in the championship, whether of falsehood or truth. The very place of our present assembling is a scene for the hostile meeting of evil angels and good; and there is not one of you who does not himself furnish a field for that strife between invisible powers, which Scriptural imagery invests with the mysteriousness that belongs to the vast and inscrutable. As the preacher sets before you your sinfulness, and, exhorting you to amendment, shows you the provision made by God for your pardon and acceptance, the words which he utters are just as weapons, on which the combatants labor to seize; the evil angels that they may blunt and throw them away, the good that they may thrust them into the understanding, and the conscience, and the heart. But, then, let it never be overlooked that we are ourselves answerable for the

issue of this struggle; that neither good angels, nor evil, can carry their end, except so far as they have us for auxiliaries. It were of all things the easiest, to make the contest, of which we are the objects, an excuse for our remaining indifferent to the Gospel, pleading that it rested with those who professed to fight our cause, to gain for it admission into the recesses of the soul. But exactly as we are not to "grieve the Holy Spirit," and, in proportion as we grieve Him, must expect his influences to be less powerfully put forth on our behalf, so are we to take heed to second good angels, who can but be instruments which the Holy Spirit employs; and to expect that the Gospel will lay hold on the heart, in proportion as we strive to clear away prejudice, and to receive it with docility and meekness.

And if you want proof how much may be lost through deficiency in that heedfulness which would aid good angels in their endeavors to give effect to the word, it is furnished by what we know of the women whom such angels address in the text. There could apparently have been nothing plainer than the preaching of our blessed Savior, in regard of his own death and resurrection. He announced, in simple, unequivocal terms, that he should be crucified by his enemies, but that on the third day he would rise from the dead; and angels, as it now seems, were present to imprint his words on the minds of the hearers, to prevent their being carried away, as the seed is carried which falls by the way-side. But the followers of the Redeemer had their minds preoccupied by prejudices; they were still looking for a temporal deliverer, and could not tolerate the mention of an ignominious death, for they associated with it the overthrow of long-cherished hopes. Hence, there was no seconding of good angels, but rather a distinct taking part with evil; and consequently the words, which might have been remembered, and could not have been misunderstood, even by a child, appear to have been completely obliterated, so that the hearers remained with as little expectation of what was coming on their Lord, as though he had never forewarned them, or forewarned them only



in dubious and mystical terms. When, therefore, the time of trial came, it virtually found them wholly unprepared; and the death of Jesus as actually demolished their hopes as if he had not told them that it should be rapidly followed by his resurrection. The women, who, had they but remembered and believed, might have come to the sepulchre, rejoicing in the assurance that it could not long hold its prey, came weeping and disheartened, bringing with them spices to anoint the body which they supposed would remain an inmate of the grave. And it might well have made them shed tears over their own darkness and unbelief, even in the midst of their gladness at the triumph won over death, that the angels, in proving to them the resurrection, had only to adduce words which should have prevented their seeking "the living among the dead;" that they had simply to say to them, "Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet with you in Galilee."

But now it should be more carefully observed, that this reminding the women of what had been said to them by Christ, is probably but an example of what continually occurs in the ministration of angels. The great object of our discourse is to illustrate this ministration, to give it something of a tangible character; and we gladly seize on the circumstance of the angels recalling to the minds of the women things which had been heard, because it seems to place under a practical point of view what is too generally considered mere useless speculation. And though we do not indeed look for any precise repetition of the scene given in our text, for angels do not now take visible shapes in order to commune with men, we know not why we should not ascribe to angelic ministration facts accurately similar, if not as palpably proceeding from supernatural agency. We think that we shall be borne out by the experience of every believer in Christ, when we affirm that texts of Scripture are often suddenly and mysteriously brought into the mind; texts which have not perhaps recently engaged our attention, but which are most nicely suited to our circumstances, or which furnish most precisely the material then need-

ed by our wants. There will enter into the spirit of a christian, on whom has fallen some unexpected temptation, a passage of the Bible which is just as a weapon wherewith to foil his assailant; or if it be an unlooked-for difficulty into which he is plunged, the occurring verses will be those best adapted for counsel and guidance; or if it be some fearful trouble with which he is visited, then will there pass through all the chambers of the soul gracious declarations, which the inspired writers will seem to have uttered and registered on purpose for himself. And it may be that the christian will observe nothing peculiar in this: there may appear to him nothing but an effort of memory, roused and acted on by the circumstances in which he is placed; and he may consider it as natural, that suitable passages should throng into his mind, as that he should remember an event at the place where he knows it to have happened.

But let him ask himself whether he is not, on the other hand, often conscious of the intrusion into his soul of what is base and defiling? Whether, if he happen to have heard the jeer and the blasphemy, the parody on sacred things, or the insult upon moral, they will not be frequently recurring to his mind? recurring too at moments when there is least to provoke them, and when it had been most his endeavor to gather round him an atmosphere of what is sacred and pure. And we never scruple to give it as matter of consolation to a christian, harassed by these vile invasions of his soul, that he may justly ascribe them to the agency of the devil: wicked angels inject into the mind the foul and polluting quotation; and there is not necessarily any sin in receiving it, though there must be if we give it entertainment, in place of casting it instantly out. But why should we be so ready to go for explanation to the power of memory, and the force of circumstances, when apposite texts occur to the mind, and then resolve into Satanic agency the profanation of the spirit with what is blasphemous and base? It were far more consistent to admit a spiritual influence in the one case as well as in the other; to suppose, that, if evil angels syllable to the soul what may have been heard

or read of revolting and impure, good angels breathe into its recesses the sacred words, not perhaps recently perused, but which apply most accurately to our existing condition. It is expressly said of the devil, that he is "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," as though he not merely had access to their minds, but took up his abode there, that he might carry on, as in a citadel, the war and the stratagem: And if evil angels have such power over the thoughts of men for evil, it seems unreasonable to question that good angels have as great influence over them for good; that they too work in the children of obedience, and are mainly instrumental in calling up and marshalling those solemn processions of sacred remembrances which pass, with silent tread, through the chambers of the spirit, and leave on them the impress of their pureness and power.

We do not wish to draw you away, in the least degree, from the truth, that "the eternal uncreated Spirit of God alone, the Holy Ghost, is the author of our sanctification, the infuser into us of the principle of divine life, and He only is able to overrule our wills, to penetrate the deepest secrets of our hearts, and to rectify our most inward faculties."\* But surely it does not infringe the office of the Holy Ghost, to suppose, with Bishop Bull, that "good angels may, and often do, as instruments of the Divine goodness, powerfully operate upon our fancies and imaginations, and thereby prompt us to pious thoughts, affections, and actions." They were angels, as you will remember, which came and ministered to our Lord after He had been exposed in the wilderness to extraordinary assaults from the devil. He had the Spirit without measure; but, nevertheless, as though to mark to us the agency which this Spirit is often pleased to employ, it was in and through angels that consolation was imparted; even as, in the dread hour of his last conflict with the powers of darkness, "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." And with every admission of the abundant comfort contained in the truth, that a Divine

person, even the Holy Ghost, is continually engaged with observing our course, and promoting our welfare, we cannot but feel that it makes this truth more tangible, or brings it more home to our perception, to suppose such beings as angels employed by the Holy Ghost to carry on his work. You know practically what comfort there is in the thought of its being in human form that the Second Person of the Trinity discharges the office of Intercessor: we should be quite lost in approaching Him, were it merely as God that He ministers above; but we are more at home, and we feel greatly assured, in having, so to speak, a created medium, through which to draw nigh.

And what is thus true of the work of intercession, carried on by the Second Person, is true also, in its measure, of the work of sanctification, which appertains specially to the Third. We can better apprehend this work, when we associate with it a created though subordinate agency; and that, which might seem vague and indefinite, if referred wholly to one infinite and inapproachable Being, commends itself to us, both as actually going forward, and as beautifully fitted to our weakness and wants, when we know it effected, through the instrumentality of creatures higher indeed and far more glorious than ourselves, but nevertheless creatures who have themselves known what moral danger is, and who can therefore rejoice, with ineffable gladness, over one sinner who turns from the error of his ways. That I cannot see these angels busying themselves with the work of my sanctification, is no more an argument against there being comfort in the fact, than is my not seeing the glorified humanity of Christ, against the encouragement which it gives as to the work of intercession. In both cases I believe that there is a something created, and therefore a something not too far removed from myself, which is engaged in ministrations for my good; and thus, in both cases, there has been a condescension to the weakness of my nature, and God may be said to have come near to me without the blaze of his celestial effulgence, that his terror might not make me afraid. Job, 33: 7.

Not only therefore can I regard it

\* Bishop Bull.



as credible, that angels stir up our torpid memories, and bring truths to our recollection, as they did to the women at the sepulchre of Christ,—I can rejoice in it as fraught with consolation, because showing that a created instrumentality is used by the Holy Ghost in the renewing our nature. And surely it may well excite gladness, that there is around the christian the guardianship of heavenly hosts; that, whilst his pathway is thronged by malignant spirits, whose only effort is to involve him in their everlasting shame, it is also thronged by ministers of grace, who long to have him as their companion in the presence of God; for there is thus what we might almost dare to call a visible array of power on our side, and we may take all that confidence which should result from being actually permitted to look on the antagonists, and to see that there are more with us than there are against. We will not debate whether other and satisfactory solutions may be given of the fact which has furnished our illustration of angelic ministration, but we doubt whether any can be more scriptural; and whilst it agrees so well with their general office, and is so fitted to strengthen us in our pilgrimage, we shall venture to regard angels as God's remembrancers to man. And they may talk to me of the tenacity of memory, and the force of circumstances—the tenacity of memory, which will often hardly serve us from day to day, but lets slip a hundred things which we longed to retain! the force of circumstances, which, ordinarily, save where there exists great presence of mind, bewilder and perplex, rather than suggest the fitting and appropriate! Yea, they may talk of the tenacity of memory, and the force of circumstances, and think to explain from such elements that recurrence to the mind of suitable texts, that sudden resurrection of forgotten passages of Scripture, at the very moment when they apply with greatest accuracy, which every christian is conscious of in himself, and which he will find exemplified in the experience of others. We have a better way of accounting for the phenomenon; a better, inasmuch as (were there nothing else to be said) it leaves to the aged the consolation of knowing that memory may de-

cay, and yet the Bible not depart from their minds. And who has not seen this exhibited in the aged? The grey-headed christian, when he has almost forgotten even the faces of friends, will yet familiarly quote the sayings of Scripture. We have then, we say, a better way of explaining the phenomenon. We ascribe it to the suggestings of those "ministering spirits," which wait on the "heirs of salvation," that texts and passages of Holy Writ come so mysteriously, but appropriately, into the mind. Oh, it is not the burning and beautiful imagery of poetry alone, which would people the air, and make it melodious with the voices of invisible beings. After all, there is more of real poetry in the facts of theology, than in the finest excursions of the human imagination. I believe, I do not fancy, that there are silent whisperings to the soul from spiritual creatures: the texts which rise up so wonderfully in the hour whether of temptation or of sorrow, as though made for the occasion, are actually the utterances of guardian beings; and if there were more of a demonstration to the senses, than when passages occur to ourselves, I know not why we should think there was a more literal suggestion of truth to the mind, in the scene presented by our text, when angels, appearing as men, said to the women that were early at the sepulchre, "Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet with you in Galilee."

But it is hardly possible to read these words of the angels, and not to feel how reproachfully they must have fallen on the ears of the women! how they must have upbraided them with want of attention and of faith! For had they but listened heedfully to what Christ had said, and had they but given due credence to his words, they would have come in triumph to welcome the living, in place of mournfully with spices to embalm the dead. If it ministered to them gladness, to be told that their Lord had risen, it must have occasioned them sorrow to be reminded that he himself had foretold his resurrection; so that their presence at the tomb, bearing what they meant to evidence their love, spake of nothing more deeply than of the neglect with which they had treated his words. It was well



for these women that they were thus taught their inattention and unbelief whilst it was not too late for repentance and confession. They might have been left to die in their forgetfulness; for there is nothing in their history to show that the strength of memory and the force of circumstances would have brought Christ's words to their remembrance; on the contrary, the empty sepulchre, which you would have thought most likely to recall the words, had nothing but a bewildering effect; for you read, "they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, and they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus; and it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments." The circumstances were precisely those which might have been expected to suggest the long-neglected sayings, and thus cause the truth to flash upon the mind: yet you see, that had there not been the angelic interference, the women would have had no explanation to give of the disappearance of the body of their Lord. And they might have been left without this interference; suffered to die with Christ's words as witnesses against them, witnesses which would have proved them inexcusable in not knowing that Messiah was to be crucified for sin, but not suffered to see corruption in the grave.

But God dealt more graciously with these women than their inattention, or want of faith, had deserved; he caused the words to be brought to their remembrance, whilst they might yet inspire confidence, though they could hardly fail also to excite bitter contrition. It is often thus with ourselves; the appropriate text is made to recur to the mind; but whilst we gather from it an abundance of comfort, we are forced to reproach ourselves for having been cast down, or terrified, when God had put such truths upon record as should have left no place for anxiety or doubt. If Christ be wakened from his sleep, through our terror at the storm, he may not only rebuke the winds and the waves, but chide us at the same time as men "of little faith."

May it not, however, be, that, where there has been wilful inattention to the

word, there will not always occur this angelic recalling of it to the mind? not, at least, whilst there is yet time for the laying it to heart? We dare not doubt this. And if the remembered words fall reproachfully on the ear, when we may yet make use of them for good, what, alas! shall it be if the words be then only recalled, when there shall no longer be "place for repentance?" Our blessed Savior Himself, speaking of what shall be the process of judgment at the last dreadful day, makes his word the great accuser of all such as reject him. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." And when with this you connect the part which angels are to take in the awful assize on the whole race of man; for we read that "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just:" that "the Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire;"—O terrible thought, that the very beings who now watch over us as friends, good angels, not evil, shall bind up the offending, and cast them into Hell!—when, we say, you connect what Christ says of his word, with what He elsewhere says of angels; the word, the condemning thing at the judgment, the angels, the ministers of vengeance; you can hardly question that the office, which celestial beings performed towards the women at the resurrection of Christ, is one which they will yet perform towards multitudes, when the earth and the sea shall have given up their dead. Is it the sensualist who is being carried away into outer darkness? and wherefore is he speechless? The attendant angel hath said, "Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet with you upon earth; Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God." It is the word which judges him, and it is the angel which binds him. Is it the covetous on whom has been passed a sentence against which he has nothing to urge? The angel hath said, "Remember how he spake unto you, Co-

vetousness, which is idolatry." Is it the proud? "Remember how he spake unto you, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the lowly." Is it the careless and the indifferent? "Remember how he spake unto you, What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Is it the procrastinator, who had deferred the season of repentance? "Remember how he spake unto you, Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

In each and every case the Word may judge, and the angels may bind. O that this were well laid to heart by all in the present assembly! We venture to say that it happens to all of you to have passages of Scripture powerfully brought home to the mind—you know not by what agency, and you cannot, perhaps, account for the sudden intrusion—but there they are; passages which would dissuade you from some pursuit on which you are tempted to enter, or urge you to some duty which you are tempted to neglect. It is the voice of a guardian spirit, that spirit, perhaps, which, in holy baptism, was

specially appointed to attend your course, which you should consider that you hear in these whispered passages. Harken ye diligently to this silent voice. Ye resist the Holy Ghost when ye resist the angel that would thus, by adducing Scripture, rebuke you, as the women were rebuked, for seeking "the living amongst the dead," the food of the soul amid the objects of sense. If, when secretly reminded of the truth, ye will give heed, and act forthwith on the suggested lesson—whether it prompt to prayer or to resistance, or to self-denial, or to amendment—we can promise you such assistance from above as shall carry you on towards the kingdom of Heaven. But if ye refuse, and turn a deaf ear, alas! alas! the voice may never again be heard on this side the grave. Yet the words have not perished; the words cannot perish: again, again, shall they find a voice, but a voice which will be burdened with condemnation; for thus shall it introduce at the judgment the long-neglected sayings, "Remember how he spake unto you, whilst he was yet with you upon earth."

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## SERMON III.

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### THE BURNING OF THE MAGICAL BOOKS.

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"Many of them also which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."—Acts, 19: 19.

This occurred at Ephesus, a celebrated city of Asia Minor, which contained that magnificent temple of Diana, which was reckoned amongst the wonders of the world. The Ephesians, it appears, were greatly addicted to the study of curious arts, to magic, sorcery, and judicial astrology, so that "Ephesian letters" became a

proverbial expression for cabalistic, or magical, characters. The Gospel, as preached by St. Paul, made great way in Ephesus, and a very flourishing church rewarded his labors. The Ephesians, according to the common course of the Divine dealings, were attacked in the way which their habits and pursuits marked out as most pro-



missing. In no place does there seem to have been so great a display of supernatural energy; as though men, much addicted to witchcraft, to the attempting unlawful intercourse with potent but invisible beings, were likely to be most wrought upon by evidence of intimate connection with spiritual agents. You read that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs, or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

It must have been very striking to the Ephesian magicians, to find that St. Paul could thus apparently communicate a sort of magical virtue to articles of dress: they were perhaps more likely than men who had never meddled with occult arts, to feel the force of such an evidence of superhuman might. In short, the Ephesians, because accustomed to produce strange results by some species or another of witchcraft, would naturally ascribe miracles to a similar agency; hence, the miracles, which were to serve as their credentials of christianity, required to be more than commonly potent, such as were not in any degree imitable, whether through the dexterity of the juggler, or the incantations of the sorcerer. And it seems to us one of those instances, not the less remarkable because easily overlooked, of the carefulness with which God adapts means to an end, that, in a city in which, of all others, false miracles were likely to abound, and improper arts made the mind familiar with strange phenomena, the powers granted to the preachers of christianity were of extraordinary extent, sufficing to place an apostle at an immeasurable distance from the most consummate magician.

It is, moreover, evident that the hold gained on the Ephesians was gained by and through the demonstration of the superiority of St. Paul's power to that possessed by any dealer in unlawful arts. In the verses which immediately precede our text, you have the account of a singular occurrence, which appears to have had much to do with the obtaining for christianity a firm footing in Ephesus. You read that certain Jews, who travelled the country as exorcists, persons, that is, who

professed to cast out the evil spirits which had then frequent possession of men's bodies, took upon them to employ the name of the Lord Jesus in their endeavors to eject demons, having observed with what success it was used by St. Paul. Amongst others who made the wicked and insolent attempt, for such it surely was, to endeavor to weave a spell from a name which they openly blasphemed, were the "seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew." As though they thought that numbers would give force to the adjuration, these seven appear to have gone together to a man demoniacally possessed, and to have addressed the foul spirit in the name of Jesus Christ. The spirit, however, answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" Thus the demon professed himself ready to submit to Jesus, or Paul, his accredited messenger; but he knew of no right which these exorcists had to dispossess him by the name whose potency he acknowledged. He was not, however, content with thus refusing to be exorcised: he took a signal revenge, causing the man, in whom he dwelt, to put forth supernatural strength, so that he leaped upon the seven men, and overcame them, and forced them to flee "out of the house naked and wounded."

This was quickly noised abroad, and produced, we are told, great effects among both the Jews and Greeks who were dwelling at Ephesus; "and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." To men accustomed to make use of charms and incantations, the evidence thus given of the sacredness of Christ's name, and of the peril of employing it to any but those who believed in his mission, would naturally be very convincing: it was just the sort of evidence which their habits made them most capable of appreciating, and by which therefore they were most likely to be overcome. Accordingly, it seems at once to have taught numbers the necessity of submitting to Christ, and renouncing those arts of magic and sorcery, through which they had perhaps endeavored to hold intercourse with spirits. They acted with great promptness on the conviction: they laid open all the mysteries of their witchcraft, they "came,

and confessed, and showed their deeds;" and then, fired with a holy indignation at the nefarious practices in which they had long indulged, and abhorring the very books which contained the rules and secrets of their arts, they gathered together the curious and costly volumes, and publicly burned them; thus evidencing their sincerity by no trifling sacrifice, for when they counted the price of these books, "they found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

Now there are certain points of view, under which if this conduct of the Ephesians be surveyed, it will appear singularly deserving of being both admired and imitated. We believe of this incident of the burning of the magical books, as of the rest of scriptural history, that it has been "written for our admonition," and ought not to be passed over with a mere cursory notice. We shall accordingly proceed to the endeavoring to extract from it such lessons as there shall seem ground for supposing it intended to furnish.

It is unnecessary for us to inquire what those arts may have been, in which the Ephesians are said to have greatly excelled. There seems no reason for doubting, that, as we have stated already, they were of the nature of magic, sorcery, or witchcraft; though we cannot profess accurately to define what such terms might import. The Ephesians, as some in all ages have done, probably laid claim to intercourse with invisible beings, and professed to derive from that intercourse acquaintance with, and power over, future events. And though the very name of witchcraft be now held in contempt, and the supposition of communion with evil spirits scouted as a fable of what are called the dark ages, we own that we have difficulty in believing, that all which has passed by the names of magic and sorcery may be resolved into sleight of hand, deception, and trick. The visible world and the invisible are in very close contact: there is indeed a veil on our eyes, preventing our gazing on spiritual beings and things; but we doubt not that whatsoever passes upon earth is open to the view of higher and immaterial creatures. And as we are sure that a man of piety and prayer enlists good angels on his side, and engages them to perform towards

him the ministrations of kindness, we know not why there cannot be such a thing as a man, whose wickedness has caused his being abandoned by the Spirit of God, and who, in this his desertion, has thrown open to evil angels the chambers of his soul, and made himself so completely their instrument, that they may use him in the uttering or working strange things, which shall have all the air of prophecy or miracle.

But whatever your opinion be as to the precise nature of sorcery, and the degree to which it might be carried, we may be sure that the books, which the Ephesian converts so resolutely burnt, contained the mysteries of the art, the rules by whose study and application men were to acquire what, at least, might resemble superhuman power and skill. And what we have first to remark on the burning of these books, is, that it manifested great detestation of their contents, though hitherto the Ephesians had specially delighted in reading and applying them. There could have been no stronger evidence of the reality of their conversion, than was given by their committing these volumes to the flames. They thus showed a thorough consciousness of the unlawfulness of the arts of which the books treated, and an abhorrence of the practices therein described. And it is always a great sign of the genuineness, the sincerity, of religion, when a man proves that the things; in which he once took delight, are regarded by him with hatred and aversion. It is given as the characteristic of vital christianity, that he, in whom it dwells, has become "a new creature." There is nothing which may take the place of this characteristic, or make up for its want. It matters not whether a man can describe the process of his conversion, or fix its exact date: he may have been truly converted, and yet be ignorant how and when it was done. But it is quite indispensable that there should be evidences of moral renewal: light and darkness are not more opposed than the state of the converted and that of the unconverted; and though I may not know the moment or manner of my being translated from the one to the other, there is more than room for doubting whether I can have been translated at all, if no change have



perceptibly passed on my hopes, desires, and fears. Regenerated in baptism, I may indeed have been "daily renewed,"\* and never, therefore, have needed conversion. But if I have ever lived a worldly life, and then hearkened to the dictates of religion, the transition may have been silently and imperceptibly effected, but must be demonstrable from strong contrasts between what I am and what I once was.

We have always therefore to require of men, who, once worldly, now think themselves converted, that they rest content with no evidence but that of a great moral change; not satisfied, because there may have been something of external reform, but searching for proof of such alteration in character, that they hate what they loved, and love what they hated. Such a proof the Ephesians gave, when they burnt their costly treatises on magic. They had been specially addicted to magic: by and through magic they had specially offended God, and periled their souls: so soon, therefore, as Christianity had won its way to their hearts, it was against magic that they showed a holy indignation; it was magic which they proved themselves resolved to abandon. The moral change was thus satisfactorily evidenced; the thing which had been most delighted in was the thing most abhorred; and no proof could be stronger, that the men were new creatures in Christ.

We ask the like proof from those of you who suppose themselves "renewed in the spirit of their mind." Have you burnt your books on magic? We do not accuse you of having, like the Ephesians, practised the arts of the sorcerer: ye have not woven spells, nor muttered incantations. Ye have had nothing to do with the mysteries of enchantment, or with the foul rites of necromancy, dazzling the living or disturbing the dead. But, nevertheless, ye have been in communion with "the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air:" ye have submitted to his illusions, and surrendered yourselves to his service. If, in some peculiar sense, the sorcerer or the magician give himself up to the devil, and make himself his instrument,

there is a broader sense in which every one of us by nature holds intercourse with fallen angels, and learns from them how to put deceits on others and himself. Yea, and we have our books upon magic. What are half the volumes with which the land is deluged, but volumes which can teach nothing but how to serve the devil better? How numerous the works of an infidel tendency! How yet more numerous those of an immoral! What a shoal of poems and tales, which, though not justly falling under either of these descriptions, can but emasculate the mind of the reader, filling it with fancies and follies, and unfitting it for high thought and solemn investigation. What treatises on the acquisition of wealth, as though money were the one thing needful; what histories of the ambitious and daring, as though human honor deserved our chief aspirations; what pictures of pleasure, as though earthly gratifications could satisfy our longings.

And if we have our books upon magic, have we not also the scenes and places where fallen spirits may be declared the presiding deities?—the crowded mart, where mammon is almost literally worshipped; the gorgeous theatre, where the very air is that of voluptuousness; the more secret haunts of licentiousness; the mirthful gatherings, where the great object is to forget God; the philosophical, where the chief endeavor is to extol man. Indeed it must not be said that there is nothing of witchcraft going on around us. The question of the Apostle to the Galatians has lost none of its force: "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" Nay, not only may every unconverted man be declared, in some great sense, under the influence of sorcery: he may be said to practise sorcery; for he is instrumental, whether by his precept or his example, to the seducing others into sin, and confirming their attachment to the world.

We may, then, almost literally bring him, if he think himself converted, to the test furnished by the conflagration of which we read in our text. We ask him whether he feels, and manifests, a righteous indignation against those practices and pursuits which at one

\* Collect for Christmas-day.

time engrossed his affections? Whatever may have been his peculiar and besetting sin, is it that sin against which he specially guards? is it that sin which he visits with the most thorough hatred? It is comparatively nothing that he is vigilant and wrathful against other sins—is he vigilant and wrathful against the favorite sin? The Ephesians directed their indignation against magic; and it was magic to which the Ephesians had been specially prone. Have we proceeded on the same principle? One man is specially acted on by the love of wealth: is it the love of wealth against which religion has made him specially earnest? Another is more disposed to the pursuit of honor: is it ambition against which religion has most roused his zeal? A third is most easily overcome by his bodily appetites: is it his grand effort, as instructed by christianity, to crucify "the flesh, with the affections and lusts?" We can take no lesser proof of sincerity: the fire must be made with the books of our own particular art, otherwise we may burn library upon library, and yet furnish no evidence of conversion.

And in this respect, even had we no other to allege, the conduct of the Ephesians reads a great lesson to the men of every age. They publicly showed that they hated and abjured the sin which they were publicly known to have most loved and practised. It was the vehement protest of the covetous man against covetousness; of the licentious against licentiousness; of the ambitious against ambition. It was not the protest of the covetous against licentiousness; nor of the licentious against ambition. There is ordinarily little difficulty in gaining such a protest as that. But it was the protest of the awakened sinner against his own chosen form of sin; and thousands are ready to protest against all but their own, to give up any other, on the single condition of keeping what they love best. Therefore, judge ye yourselves, we again say, by your likeness to the Ephesians. Ye have tampered, in one sense, like them, with sorcery. Ye have gone down to the cave of the enchantress, and ye have drunk of that cup by which the tempter hopes to steal away men's faculties. Ye have

had your books in which ye have studied magic—whether the magic by which the metal and the jewel may be made to flow into your coffers; or that by which ye may wreath the brow with laurel; or that by which ye may fascinate the senses, and make life one round of luxurious enjoyment. But ye now think that religion has hold upon you, and that ye are no longer what ye were. And heartily do we trust that you are right in your opinion, and that there is no self-deceit. But this we must tell you—if ye be, indeed, converted, the evidence of the conversion will be in the manifested abhorrence, not only generally of sin, but especially of that sin in which you most indulged—oh, you will virtually do what was done by the Ephesians, who, because they had peculiarly provoked God by the practising curious arts, were no sooner led to a true belief in Christ, than they "brought their books together, and burned them before all men."

It would, however, be inferring comparatively very little from this action of the Ephesians, were we to regard it only as expressing their detestation of their favorite sin. We may justly suppose that they had their safety in view, when throwing into the flames the treatises on magic. They might have publicly renounced the arts which they had been accustomed to practise, without burning the rare volumes which had initiated them into their mysteries. They might have shut up these volumes, retaining them as mere literary curiosities, though resolving never again to refer to them for instruction in witchcraft. But there would have been a want of christian prudence in this; this would have kept them continually exposed to temptation; and it was in their not doing this, that we count them greatly worthy of being admired and imitated. It is very clear that, had they not destroyed their treatises on magic, there would always have been a risk of their returning to their study: it was not unlikely that, so soon as the first heat of religion had passed, they would again have taken up the curious books, and read them for recreation, if not for instruction. We do not necessarily suppose that they would have turned to them with any design of resuming unlawful prac-



tices; but they might have perused them as a singular species of literature, from which entertainment might be drawn, without any surrender of the persuasion that they taught only what was foul and unhallowed.

Yet any such intention of making any use whatever of the books would have shown a sort of lurking affection for what they contained, and could not, at least, have been carried into effect without risk of the being seduced back into the practice of sorcery. The Ephesians, therefore, wisely determined to put themselves out of the way of temptation; and this, you observe, they effectually did by burning their books; for, in all probability, those books were not to be replaced, even had they wished for them again; there was then no printing-press, that mighty engine for multiplying evil as well as good. Thus they cut themselves off, in a very high degree, from the possibility of returning to their divinations and enchantments: they showed a wholesome distrust of their own strength and resolution, and proved that, with real christian prudence, they thought it better to shun than to brave moral peril.

And herein did they become a great example to ourselves. We have to require of those of you who have broken away from the enchantments and fascinations of the world, that they show a like zeal in avoiding the scenes and occasions of temptation. It is not christian courage, it is nothing better than presumption, when a man unnecessarily exposes himself to spiritual danger, as though counting himself proof against assault, and not again to be entangled in things once abandoned. When we are brought into temptation, by walking the clear path of duty, we have the best reason to expect such assistance from above as shall enable us to hold fast our integrity. But if we be not in the clear path of duty when we meet the temptation; if it be through our own choice or hardihood that our constancy is endangered; there is great probability that God will suffer us to fall, if only to teach us our feebleness, and our need of stronger caution for the future. God permitted not the fire to singe a hair of the heads of the three Jewish youths, who preferred the being cast into a furnace to the worship-

ping an idol; but had they presumptuously thrown themselves into the flames, in place of having been enveloped in them for the maintenance of truth, do you think that the like miracle would have been wrought on their behalf? And similarly with the Ephesians, it might happen to them, that books on magic would fall in their way, and that they would be tempted to peruse their unhallowed pages. But they would have had nothing to do with the causing this temptation, and might, therefore, expect to be strengthened to withstand it. But if, on the other hand, they had kept themselves in the way of temptation by preserving the treatises, they would have had only themselves to blame, if, as in all likelihood it would have happened, they had been drawn back to the study, and perhaps even the practice, of unlawful arts.

Here, therefore, we have again to ply the professing christians amongst you with the question, have ye burnt your books on magic? Ye will readily understand the precise force of the question, as addressed to yourselves, and how it must be modified to meet a difference in circumstances. As we before said, ye have had nothing to do with the arts of the sorcerer, in the sense in which those arts were practised by the Ephesians. But nevertheless ye have lived in a very atmosphere of witchery; the spell has been woven over you and around you; the gorgeous phantoms, the brilliant shadows, with which evil spirits people the world, "beguiling unstable souls," these once dazzled and allured you, though now the illusion is broken, and ye have resolved to walk henceforwards by the light of God's word. And what have ye done in regard of sources and occasions of temptation? upon what principle have you acted with respect to books, and scenes, and practices, which experience has identified with the artifices of that great deceiver, who once had you altogether in his power? It may be that one of you was half inclined to infidelity: he read sceptical books, whose assertions he could not disprove, and whose sophistries he could not unravel—he was magician enough to conjure up doubts, but wanted the wand of truth wherewith to dis-

perse them. Christianity, however, has been presented to him with that over-coming evidence which it wears, when preached with "demonstration of the Spirit and of power;" and he has put away all unbelief, and cordially admitted the Gospel as a message from God. But what has he done with the magical books, with the treatises which entangled him in the maze of infidelity? There is such a thing as preserving, yea, as reading a book from a literary motive, when it is held in abhorrence on every other account. The book may be very rare, or very eloquent; it may be valuable for its style, or for information which it contains, though unhappily fraught with Deistical principles. And the man, on whom the book once acted like an initiation into sorcery, forcing him into a region of wild cloud and shadow, will, perhaps, when he has shaken off scepticism, study the book afresh, because relishing its beauty of diction, or wishing to show himself proof against its falsehoods. Ah! he had better have imitated the Ephesians: he is fearfully and unnecessarily endangering his faith: he should rather have burnt the book on magic; he should have done, we mean, his best to put, or to keep, the dangerous volume out of reach.

It may be that another of you has lived much in vice, submitting himself to the tyranny of his passions, and walking within the circles of what is falsely called pleasure. And in this his sensual career he has, perhaps, been often excited to fresh indulgence by the licentious writings of poets, men who have prostituted all the graces of song to the service of impurity. It is one of the foulest and most melancholy of facts, that writers of extraordinary genius, not to be surpassed in the play of imagination and the power of language, have desecrated their talents to the adorning debauchery, to the throwing a grace and a beauty over the abominations of vice. And it must be a fatal and a standing reproach on our literature, that it contains volumes which are almost unrivalled in the mere article of composition, rich in the splendor of diction, the brilliancy of metaphor, and the pathos of description, but which put all modesty to the blush, and but few fragments of which

can we venture to place in the hands of our children. These deserve to be called the treatises on magic, when it is the wand of pleasure which evil spirits wave. It is beyond calculation what an amount of viciousness is fostered in a land, through the circulation of loose, but beautiful, poetry. We speak not of publications which can be only sold in secret, and the venders of which have only to become known to be punished by law. We speak of those to which no such open stigma is attached, but which are, nevertheless, as instrumental to the fanning base passions, and encouraging licentiousness, as the more indecent and scandalous, which draw upon themselves judicial condemnation. There is many a young person who would shrink from gross writings with a sort of instinctive abhorrence, but who is not proof against the seductions of voluptuous poetry, and to whom, therefore, the elegant author, who can clothe immorality in a fascinating dress, will serve as a sort of High Priest of vice, though he might have been disgusted by any of its less polished ministers.

But our question now is, what does the sensualist do with the magical books, when convinced, by the urgency of christianity, of the duty of living "soberly, righteously, and godly in the world?" Is there not much, even amongst those who profess an utter abhorrence of licentiousness, of retaining, and reading, for the sake of their exquisite poetry, works confessedly immoral in their tendency? Are not the graces of composition accepted in apology for the deficiencies in principle? Does not many a man tolerate, yea, even enjoy, books which, in a religious point of view, he utterly repudiates, because they contain passages of unexampled sublimity, or flash throughout with the coruscations of genius? We have only to say upon this, that the Ephesians acted more nobly, and more wisely. The man, who has once been the slave of his passions, and who has found those passions excited by voluptuous writings, ought never again to open the volumes, as though he might now gather the beauties of poetry without imbibing the sentiments of impurity: the volumes ought to be to him, as if the only copies had been



consumed in the flames—the Ephesians should be his pattern, who not merely abjured what they had learnt to be wrong, but did their utmost to keep themselves out of reach, for the future, of the temptations by which they had been overcome.

And, without confining ourselves to the precise case of books, what is your course generally in regard of occasions of sin, of places and occupations which you have found detrimental to religion? Do you make a point of shunning what you have discovered to be injurious? or do you venture on a repetition, in the confidence of being too strong to be again injured? The associates who encouraged you in sin, whilst careless of the soul—have you given them up, now that you are anxious for the soul? or do you act on the supposition, that there is no further fear of your being carried away by the force of companionship? You found that worldly amusements—the theatre, with its licentious accompaniments; the masquerade and the dance, with their frivolity at least, if not their sinfulness; the card-table, with its trial of temper, even where it did not excite the spirit of gambling—you found that these warred against the soul, whilst you were yet unconverted; but what have you done as a proof and result of conversion? Have you striven, to the best of your power, to place barriers between yourselves and these amusements? or are you still partaking of them, only in less measure, and with a diminished affection?

Or, once more, if it were for wealth that you had dealings with the sorcerer, dedicating every moment and energy to the arts by which gold may be multiplied, how have you acted since the grace of God, as you think, brought you to love and seek everlasting treasures? Have you put from you what was too engrossing in occupation? or are you still as engaged as ever in the witchcraft of money-making?

You can hardly fail to understand the drift of these questions. The thing which we wish impressed upon you is, that, whatever may have been your dominant passion before conversion, your great effort, in proof of conversion, should be the cutting yourselves off from temptations to the gratifying that passion. We care not what en-

chantment you most practised, or by what you were most beguiled; your endeavor should be, to keep yourselves as much as possible out of the sphere of that enchantment; not exposing yourselves to its influence, as though its power were gone, but placing yourselves beyond its reach, as though your weakness remained. And if ever we see a man, who has been delivered from the meshes of infidelity, still fond of studying sceptical writings; or another, who has been won from licentiousness, adventuring into the haunts of dissipation; or a third, whose idol was gold, taking no pains to withdraw from the atmosphere of covetousness; or a fourth, whom evil companions had seduced, braving the charm of old association—oh, we cannot but greatly fear for such a man, that his contempt of danger will make him its victim; that, by not detaching himself at once from occasions and scenes of temptation, he has but insured relapses and backslidings: we can but desire that he had taken the Ephesians as his model, who no sooner renounced magic, than, as though fearful of being again entangled in its study, and distrusting themselves whilst they had access to its rules, “brought their books together, and burned them before all men.”

But there is yet another point of view under which we may survey the conduct of the Ephesians, and find in it a test of the genuineness of conversion. We have spoken of the burning of the magical books as proving detestation of a favorite sin, and earnestness in avoiding the being again tempted to its commission. But we may allow that other ways might have been found in which to express abhorrence of sorcery; and that, perhaps, some of the Ephesians might have retained the books in their possession, without much risk of resuming the unlawful studies. Yet if equal detestation might have been otherwise shown, and if no personal risk whatsoever had been run, we should still have to applaud, and point out for imitation, that action of the Ephesians which stands recorded in our text. So long as the books were preserved, there was of course no security against their falling into the hands of unstable persons, who would be tempted by them to the en-

gaging in the trade of the magician. But by actually destroying the books, the most effectual means were taken to prevent the spread of the study of sorcery; for, as we have already remarked, there was then no printing-press to multiply indefinitely the copies of a work. The books must have been manuscripts, produced with great care, and procured at large cost. In our own day, indeed, very little would in most cases be gained by the burning our copy of an improper book. We should not thereby necessarily do much, if any thing, towards preventing the work from finding its way into the possession of others. But it was very different, as you must all perceive, before the invention of printing; and it is highly probable that the Christian converts could have done nothing more instrumental to the suppression of magic in Ephesus, than the consigning to the flames the books on curious arts which they respectively owned. It was going far towards destroying the grammars and dictionaries of the cabalistic language, and thus leaving those, who might wish to learn witchcraft, deprived of the common means of ascertaining its elements. And we suppose, accordingly, that the Ephesians were greatly actuated by this motive: it was not enough for them, either that they had themselves abjured magic, or were not themselves likely to be again injured by the books: they had respect to the welfare of others; and feeling that this welfare might be endangered by the magical volumes, they threw without reserve those volumes into the flames, though their price, when counted, was found to be "fifty thousand pieces of silver."

And here we have again to declare the Ephesians an example,\* and to ply you with the question, Have you, from the like motive, burnt your books on magic? There is no better test of the genuineness of conversion, than earnestness in seeking the conversion of others. It cannot be that a man has been brought to a sense of his sinfulness, of the danger to which as a sinner he is exposed, and of the provision made by Christ for his deliverance, and yet is indifferent to the condition of those who live "without hope, and without God in the world." There is

the widest possible separation between vital Christianity and whatsoever has alliance with selfishness: vital Christianity is a generous, expansive thing: the man of the world may be willing to keep earthly riches to himself; the man of God must be anxious to communicate heavenly to others. In spiritual things, anxiety does not terminate with the securing our own safety: it is rapidly transferred to others; and when humbly confident of being "begotten again to a lively hope," we shall be painfully solicitous to make those around us fellow-heirs of the promise. One of the strongest feelings in the converted man, is that the great things done for him by God bind him to attempt great things in return: as he looks upon those who still sit "in darkness and the shadow of death," the light, with which he has been visited, will seem to him given on purpose to be diffused.

The Ephesians, as we think, quite satisfied this test of conversion when they burnt their magical books. It was the action by which, as we have shown you, more was done than could perhaps have else been achieved, towards preventing others from engaging in practices which themselves had found most pernicious. So that the flames, in which they consumed their treatises on witchcraft, were the best tokens of the ardency of their love for the souls of their fellow-men. Have you given any thing of a like token? Where are your books upon magic? What have you done towards keeping others from the sins to whose commission you were yourselves most addicted? For what has been most injurious to yourselves, you will naturally feel likely to be most injurious to others, and it will therefore be that against which you will most strive to put others on their guard. The man, once tinctured with infidelity, will be zealous in suppressing sceptical writings, and diffusing their refutation. The man who has lived in licentiousness, will be so earnest in nothing as in discountenancing vice and promoting morality. The man who was injured by bad company, will do all in his power to keep the unwary from evil associations. The man who has experienced the hurtfulness of public amusements, will be urgent against

places and diversions which he found full of peril. The man who was likely to have been ruined through covetousness, will warn others, above all things, against the love of money. And in these or similar cases, the thing done is precisely what was done by the Ephesians: the books on magic are burnt, with the distinct view of keeping others from practising magic: individuals do their best to put down or obstruct that particular form of evil which proved most entangling and detrimental to themselves.

Let those of you who think themselves converted, try by this test the genuineness of their conversion. Each must well know the sin to which he was most inclined, and by which his salvation was most endangered; is he, then, all anxiety to keep others from that sin, and to remove from them temptations to its commission? The converted man is not only desirous to prevent sin in general; he is specially desirous to prevent that sin which was once his besetting sin; to guard men against it, and to cut off its occasions. This is what we call burning the books on magic—the acting with the set design of withholding others from what has been peculiarly hurtful to ourselves. And if the man who was injured by sceptical writings manifest no special zeal against infidelity; or if he, who was in bondage to the lusts of the flesh, be not foremost in opposing licentiousness; or if another, who had almost shipwrecked himself for eternity in the theatre, or at the gaming-table, be not energetic in withdrawing others from haunts of dissipation; or generally, if an individual, who was all but lost through living in a certain sin, take no earnest measures for preventing those around him from committing that sin; oh, we are bound to fear for such a man, that he does but deceive himself, when thinking that he has undergone a great moral change; and we must urge upon him the comparing himself with the Ephesians of old, who were no sooner brought to faith in the Savior than, animated with desire to suppress the arts which had endangered their souls, they collected their books, and threw them into the flames, though, when the price of them was counted, “they found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

Our concluding remarks on the burning the treatises on sorcery, will be of a somewhat different texture from the foregoing. The epistle which St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians about four years after this event, is among the most beautiful and valuable portions of the New Testament.\* It is not, as is the Epistle to the Romans, or that to the Hebrews, a great controversial treatise; it is a letter to those who, having been well initiated into Christianity, and grounded in its fundamental principles, might be conducted to its more secret depths, or admitted into acquaintance with its profounder mysteries. There is, perhaps, no part of the writings of St. Paul, in which the elements of Christian truth are more assumed as placed beyond controversy, and in which, therefore, the Apostle seems to feel more at liberty to descend on sublime things, and unfold glorious wonders. If it be lawful, in speaking of Scripture, to draw such a distinction, we should say that the Epistle to the Ephesians is among the most spiritual of the inspired writings, throwing open, in an uncommon degree, the very recesses of the Gospel, and presenting such heights of Christian doctrine as, after all our soarings, still lose themselves in the clouds.

And it has been justly pointed out, as singularly worthy of observation, that it was to men who had burnt their books on curious arts that an epistle was indited, so replete with what is most wonderful, most beautiful, most profound, in Christianity. If you will allow us the expression, it was like repaying them in kind. The Ephesians had abandoned the mysteries of sorcery and astrology: at the bidding of the Apostle they had renounced unhallowed modes of prying into the secrets of the invisible world; and they were recompensed by being led to the innermost shrines of truth, and permitted to behold glories which were veiled from common gaze. They gave up the astrology, which is busied with stars that shall be quenched, and lo, “the Sun of righteousness” rose on them with extraordinary effulgence; they renounced the magic which would conjure up strange forms, and a rod, like



that of Moses, was stretched forth, peopling the whole universe with images of splendor; they abjured the necromancy, which sought to extort from the dead revelations of the future, and the very grave became luminous, and its ashes glowed for them with immortality.

Learn ye from this, that ye cannot give up any thing for God, and be losers by the surrender. The loss is always far more than made up, and, perhaps, often by the communication of something which resembles, whilst it immeasurably excels, what you part

with. Never stay, then, to compute the cost: the Ephesians do not seem to have computed it before they burnt their books, though they computed it after—and then, not in regret, but only to display the triumph of the Gospel. Let the cost be “fifty thousand pieces of silver:” hesitate not to make the sacrifice for God, and you shall find yourselves a hundred-fold recompensed: like the Ephesians, if you forsake magic, because God hath forbidden it, ye shall be initiated into mysteries which the Holy Spirit alone can reveal.

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## SERMON IV.

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### THE PARTING HYMN.

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“And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives.”—Matthew, 26 : 30.

These words refer, as you are probably all aware, to the conclusion of our Lord's last supper with his disciples, when, having instituted a sacrament which was to take the place of the Passover, he went forth to meet the sufferings through which the world should be redeemed. The evangelist St. John does not give any account of the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but he records sundry most important discourses which Christ delivered at this time to his afflicted disciples. It is probable that a portion of these discourses was uttered immediately after the institution of the Sacrament, and before our Lord quitted the chamber in which he had supped with his followers. The remainder are generally thought to have been delivered on the Mount of Olives, to which Christ first went, as is stated in our text, and from which, as the night advanced,

he retired with Peter, and James, and John, to Gethsemane, that he might undergo mysterious agony, and meet in dread conflict the powers of darkness. But, to whatever times and places we may affix the several discourses preserved by St. John, there is every reason to think that our text relates the last thing which occurred in the room where the supper had been eaten; that, so soon as the hymn, or psalm, had been sung, our Lord left the room, that he might give himself to the enemies who thirsted for his blood. Opportunity may have been afterwards found of fortifying still further the minds of the disciples; but we are to consider that the singing of the hymn was the last thing done at Christ's last supper, and that, this having been done, the blessed Redeemer, as one who knew that his hour was come, forthwith departed to suffer and to die.

And what was the hymn, or psalm, chanted at so fearful and melancholy a moment? There is no reason to think that our Lord swerved from the custom of the Jews; he had commemorated the Passover as it was then wont to be commemorated by his countrymen; and we may justly, therefore, conclude that he sung what they were used to sing in finishing the solemn celebration. When the Passover was instituted, on the eventful night of the destruction of the first-born of the Egyptians, various forms and practices were enjoined, as you find related in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Exodus. But in after-times, especially in those of our Savior, when traditions had come to their height, numerous circumstances were added to the celebration, so that the original rites formed but a small part of what were practised by the Jews.\* And learned men have well observed that the New Testament, in several places, refers to certain of these additional circumstances, leaving us to infer that Christ commemorated the Passover as it was then ordinarily commemorated, without rejecting such customs as could not distinctly plead the authority of the law. Thus, for example, at the first Passover in Egypt, the strict injunction had been, that they should eat it "with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, their staves in their hands, and in haste. The posture enjoined and practised corresponded accurately with their condition, that of men about to be thrust forth from the country, and to enter on a toilsome and difficult march. But afterwards the Jews altered the posture, that it might answer better to their altered circumstances. At their common meals the Jews either sat, as we do, with their bodies erect, or reclined on couches, with the left elbow on the table. But on the Passover night they considered themselves obliged to use the recumbent position, because it marked, as they thought, their freedom and composure. Now it is evident, that in this our Lord conformed to the custom of the Jews: the beloved disciple, John, leant on his bosom during the repast, from which we infer,

at once, that Christ and his Apostles reclined in the eating the Passover.

To give another instance. The eating of unleavened bread at this time was enjoined by a special and express command, which you find in the Book of Exodus; but nothing is there said as to the use of wine at the Passover. Subsequently, however, the drinking wine at the Passover came to be considered as indispensable as the eating the unleavened bread. We find it expressly stated by the Rabbinical writers, that "the poorest man in Israel was bound to drink off four cups of wine this night, yea, though he lived of the alms-basket." Now it is very clear that our Lord and his disciples made use of wine at the Passover: nay, Christ may be said to have given a direct sanction to what might have been regarded as the innovation of tradition; for he took the cup which men had introduced into the paschal supper, and consecrated it in perpetual memorial of his own precious blood. In like manner, with regard to the singing of a psalm or hymn—there is nothing said in the Book of Exodus as to the concluding the paschal supper with any such act, yet the custom was introduced in process of time, and the Jews made a point of singing the hundred and thirteenth and the five following Psalms, Psalms which are said to have been selected, not only because containing, in the general, high and eminent memorials of God's goodness and deliverance unto Israel, but because they record these five great things, "the coming out of Egypt, the dividing of the sea, the giving of the law, the resurrection of the dead, and the lot of Messias." These psalms were repeated, or chanted, on other occasions besides that of the Passover—as at the feast of Pentecost, and on the eight days of the feast of Dedication. But at no time was their use more strictly observed than on the night of the Passover, though they were not then all sung at once, but rather dispersed over the service; only so that, when the last cup of wine was filled, the concluding psalms were sung; and thus the solemnities terminated with the chant, "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto

\* See Lightfoot on the celebration of the Passover.

the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." As we are expressly told that Christ concluded the Passover with a psalm or hymn, we cannot well doubt, that, having conformed in other respects to the existing customs of the Jews, he conformed also in this; and that, consequently, the words which he sung with his disciples were the words then ordinarily used in the solemn commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt. We shall assume this through the remainder of our discourse; so that if, over and above the fact of a hymn having been sung, we have occasion to refer to the subject-matter of the hymn, we shall turn to the psalms which constituted what the Jews called the Hallel, from the repetition of the word "Hallelujah," and seek in them for the expressions which were woven into the anthem of our Lord and his Apostles.

There are many truths which present themselves to the mind, when it duly ponders the simple statement of the text. Our foregoing remarks, bearing merely on the fact that Christ conformed to the innovations of the Jews, will only help us to the making one use, though an important one, of the passage. We shall find, however, as we proceed, that what we may have been used to pass by, as the bare announcement of a fact but little interesting to ourselves, is fraught with rich and varied instruction. Let us then employ ourselves, without anticipating any further the lessons to be extracted, in considering whether, as with all other Scripture, it were not for our admonition and instruction in righteousness, that the sacred historian, having given us the account of the last supper, was directed to record of Christ and his Apostles, that "when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."

Now the first important truth on which we would speak, as enforced or illustrated by the passage under review, is that to which our introductory remarks have all tended, that our blessed Lord, by conforming to certain customs of the Jews in the eating of the Passover, gave his sanction to ceremonies which may not be able to plead a divine institution. We have shown you that it was not only in the singing

of psalms, but in many other particulars, such as the recumbent posture, and the drinking of wine, that the Jews had altered, or added to, the original practice, but that our Savior made no objection to the alteration or addition. He celebrated the Passover just as he found it then used to be celebrated, submitting, so to speak, to tradition and custom. And yet, had there been any thing of a captious spirit, there might perhaps have been matter for doubt or disputation. It might have been urged, with some show of justice, that the innovations were not necessarily in keeping with the character of the ordinance; that the recumbent posture, for example, and the drinking of wine, as betokening, or according with, security and gladness, scarcely suited the commemoration of events which had been marked by hurry, agitation, and alarm. And with regard even to the singing of psalms—if it had been admitted that the occasion was one which would well warrant the praising God with loud anthems, it might still have been asked, Why use these particular psalms? Have we not the Song of Miriam, which, as composed immediately after the deliverance from Egypt, would be far more appropriate? or have we not the song of Moses? and would not the song of the leader, through whom the Passover was instituted, and the emancipation achieved, remind us better of what we owe to God, than the words of one who lived long after the recorded events, when we were settled as a nation, and not wanderers in the desert?

We think there would have been no difficulty in thus making out, so to speak, a sort of plausible case against the innovations of the Jews in the Passover service. Had our Lord been a leader, disposed to make ceremonies the occasion of schism, he might have armed himself with very specious objections, and have urged that there were conscientious grounds for separating from the communion of the national church. But it is evident that our blessed Savior acknowledged a power in the church of decreeing rites and ceremonies, and of changing those rites and ceremonies "according (as our thirty-fourth Article expresses it) to the diversities of countries, times,



and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word." He did not require that every ceremony should be able to plead a positive command in the Bible, nor that it should prove itself modelled after the original practice. Had he done this, it is manifest that he must have objected to the ceremonies in the celebration of the Passover; for they could not plead a divine institution, and were rather at variance than in accordance with what had been at first appointed or observed. But we may justly conclude that our Lord proceeded on what (were it not for modern cavils) we might call a self-evident principle, that rites and ceremonies are not in themselves any part of the public worship of God; they are nothing but circumstances and customs to be observed in the conducting that worship, and may therefore be enacted and altered as shall seem best to the church. Had the innovations of the Jews interfered, in any measure, with the character of the Passover as a religious ordinance, had they at all opposed its commemorative office, or militated against it as a sacrifice and a sacrament, we cannot doubt that Christ would have entered his protest, that he would never have given the sanction of his example to what would have been a corruption of the worship of God. This, however, is more than can justly be affirmed of any mere rite or ceremony; for rites or ceremonies, so long as they are not against Scripture, must be regarded as indifferent things, neither good in themselves nor bad; and if they are indifferent, they may be omitted, or introduced, or changed, without at all affecting the act of divine worship, and merely in conformity, according to diversity of circumstances, with the rule of the Apostle, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

Perhaps the Jews, in changing the posture in which the Passover was to be eaten, went as near to an interference with the ordinance itself as any mere rite or ceremony could go; for it might have been urged that a different, if not an untrue, character was given to the ordinance, the aspect of composedness and rest having been made to take the place of that of haste and agitation. But you are to remem-

ber that the circumstances of the Israelites were really changed: the Passover, as to be commemorated in after times, found them in a very altered position from what they had occupied when the Passover was originally instituted; and the new rites, which they introduced, did but correspond to this new position; they interfered neither with the slaying nor with the eating of the lamb; they were only so far different from the old as to indicate what was matter of fact in regard of the Jews, that, as their fathers eat the Passover in a night of disaster and death, themselves were allowed, through the mercy of God, to eat of it in security and gladness. And it can hardly fail to strike you, that, in such an alteration, when distinctly sanctioned by the practice of our Lord, we have a precedent for changes which the church may have introduced into the ceremonials of religion. Take, for example, a case which bears close resemblance to that just considered. When the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was originally instituted, the Apostles sat or reclined in the receiving it; whereas it is now the appointment of the church, that we should kneel to receive it. There has been, that is, much of the same departure from the first practice as in the instance of the Passover. And if by the act of kneeling we offered any adoration to the bread and the wine, as though we supposed them substantially changed into Christ's body and blood, it is evident that the alteration in the ceremony would be an infringement of the Sacrament itself, and that no church would have right to substitute the kneeling for the sitting. But the kneeling at the Communion, as we are expressly taught by the church, is meant only "for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy receivers;" and the alteration may therefore be said to be just such as was made by the Jews in respect of the Passover—an alteration corresponding to altered circumstances: when the Lord's Supper was instituted, Christ had not died, and the benefits of his death, as conveyed through the Sacrament, were but partially, if at all, understood; but now that Christ hath died, and the Spirit been given to

explain and apply his finished work, we know that the Lord's Supper is the great instituted means for the communication to our souls of the results of his sacrifice; and surely, if a reclining posture became those who had yet to learn what the Sacrament would do for them, a kneeling may be more appropriate, when the office of that holy mystery has been more unfolded.

But without insisting further on particular instances, which would only unduly detain us from other and more interesting truths, we venture to take our Lord's conduct, in regard of the ceremonies at the Passover, as establishing the authority of the church to ordain and alter ceremonies and rites, and as strongly condemning those who would make mere ceremonies and rites the excuses for disunion and schism. Our Lord conformed to customs and alterations, for which it would have been impossible to produce divine warrant, and against which it would not have been difficult to advance some specious objections. And we argue, therefore, that the church is not obliged to find chapter and verse for every ceremony which she is pleased to enjoin, as though she had no power of settling points of discipline or order, except so far as she can justify the settlement by an appeal to inspired authority. We argue further, from the instance before us, that the church having appointed what she judges most for the general good, individuals have no right to separate and oppose, because they do not find the appointment precisely congenial with their feelings or circumstances. Look at Christ and his Apostles—they were about to be parted: Christ was just entering upon scenes immeasurably more tremendous than had ever been passed through by any of our race; the Apostles were full of apprehensions and grief, for their Lord had announced his departure, and the announcement had distracted their minds. What an unseasonable moment for singing joyous hymns! How natural to have said, "This part of the appointed service is not suited to us now; and, forasmuch as it certainly is not of divine institution, we may surely dispense with it, when our hearts are so heavy and sad." But no! it was the ordinance of the church: the church

had full authority to appoint such an ordinance; and Christ and his Apostles would give their testimony to the duty of conformity to all lawful ordinances, whether in unison or not with individual feelings. And on this account, as we may venture to believe—or, if not for this purpose, assuredly with this result—though they were stricken in spirit, disquieted, yea, sorely distressed, they would not depart from the chamber till they had done all which was enjoined by the church, and thus shown that they acknowledged her authority; it was not until "they had sung an hymn," that "they went out into the Mount of Olives."

But now let us take another view of this fact. We have just considered the singing of an hymn as inappropriate to the circumstances of Christ and his Apostles; and no doubt there was an apparent unsuitableness which might have been pleaded by those who sought an excuse for disobedience to ecclesiastical rule. Solomon has said, "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart." And thus the wise man may be considered as having delivered his testimony against the fitness of music and minstrelsy, when there is a weight at the heart, and the spirits are oppressed. But "a greater than Solomon is here;" and we may perhaps say that it was with the singing of an hymn that Christ prepared himself for his unknown agony. Setting aside all considerations drawn from the ordinances of the Church, is it at all strange that our blessed Lord and his disciples should have sung joyous hymns at a moment so full of darkness and dread? For joyous hymns they were in which they joined: music has its melancholy strains as well as its gladdening—the dirge for the funeral as well as the song for the marriage or the banquet; and Christ and his Apostles might have thrown the sadness of their spirits into the slow, measured cadences of some solemn lament. But, as we have just said, they were joyous hymns in which they joined. Look at the Jewish Hallel, and you find it abounding in expressions of confidence and praise: "The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing



and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

And was it, think you, a strange preparation for the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane, thus to commemorate the mercies, and chant the praises of the Most High God? Nay, it is recorded of Luther that, on receiving any discouraging news, he was wont to say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm,"—that Psalm which commences with the words, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." And it were well for us, my brethren, if in seasons of trouble we betook ourselves to praise, and not only to prayer. If we find ourselves in circumstances of difficulty, if dangers surround us, and duties seem too great for our strength, we almost naturally cry unto God, and entreat of him assistance and guardianship. And indeed we do right: God has made our receiving conditional on our asking; and we can never be too diligent in supplicating at his hands the supply of our many necessities. But ought we to confine ourselves to prayer, as though praise were out of place when mercies are needed, and only became us when they have just been received? Not so: praise is the best auxiliary to prayer; and he who most bears in mind what has been done for him by God, will be most emboldened to supplicate fresh gifts from above. We should recount God's mercies, we should call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to laud and magnify his name, when summoned to face new trials, and encounter fresh dangers. Would it sound to you strange, if on approaching the chamber where, as you knew, the father of a family had just breathed his last, you heard voices mingling, not in a melancholy chant, but rather in one of lofty commemoration, such as might be taken from the Jewish Hallel, "The Lord hath been mindful of us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Is-

rael, he will bless the house of Aaron? The Lord is on my side, I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Would you be disposed to say that the widow and the orphans, whose voices you recognized in the thankful anthem, were strangely employed? and that the utterances over the dead would have more fittingly been those of earnest petition unto God, of deep-drawn entreaty for the light of his countenance and the strength of his Spirit? Nay, the widow and her orphans, if not actually praying the most effectual of prayers, would be thereby most effectually preparing themselves for praying unto God: if, now that their chief earthly stay is removed, they have to enter on a dark and dangerous path, they cannot do better than thus call to mind what the Almighty has proved himself to others and themselves; the anthem is the best prelude to the supplication; and their first step toward the Mount of Olives will be all the firmer, if, before they cry, "Hold thou up our goings in thy paths," they join in the song, "His merciful kindness is great towards us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever; praise ye the Lord."

We wish you to draw this lesson from the last action of Christ and his Apostles, before they went forth to extraordinary trial. We wish you to observe, and understand, that so far from being unsuited to circumstances of perplexity and danger, the song of praise should at least mingle with the cry of prayer, and that, if you would arm yourselves for trouble and for duty, you should recount the marvellous acts of the Lord, as well as supplicate the communications of his grace. This is too much overlooked and neglected by Christians. They are more familiar with the earnest petition than with the grateful anthem. Like the captives in Babylon, they hang their harps upon the willows, when they find themselves in a strange land; whereas, if they would sing "one of the songs of Zion," it would not only remind them of home, but encourage them to ask assistance and expect deliverance. Make trial of this method, ye who have a dark path before you, and who shrink from entering into the cloud. You have offered prayer—have you also offered praise? you have commended your-



selves to God for the future—have you also commemorated his care of you through the past? Say not, "How can I sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" With this burden upon me, and this prospect before me, it is too much to expect me to do more than pray: who can sing songs with a heavy heart?" This is the very feeling against which we would warn you. There is no Christian with so great cause of sorrow, as to be without a greater of thankfulness. And the chords of the soul will never give forth so fervent a prayer, as when the Christian has been endeavoring to string them to the chorus of praise. Look at Christ and his Apostles. You will not say that your circumstances can be more distressing than theirs; that there is more, in the peculiarities of the trial, to excuse you from singing "the Lord's song." Yet before they departed—the Redeemer to his terrible agony, the disciples to the dreaded separation—the last thing which they did was to join in the chanting of thankful psalms: it was not until "they had sung an hymn," but then it was, that "they went out into the Mount of Olives."

We have yet to observe, that, so far as praise is a great auxiliary to prayer, and therefore well adapted to circumstances of perplexity and danger, the repetition of thankful psalms might seem sufficient; whereas, with Christ and his Apostles, there was the singing of such psalms. We think that this fact ought not to be let pass without a more special comment.

We are too apt to regard music as a human art, or invention, just because men make certain musical instruments, and compose certain musical pieces. And hence there are Christians who would banish music from the public worship of God, as though unsuited to, or unworthy of, so high and illustrious an employment. But it is forgotten, as has been observed by a well-known writer,\* that the principles of harmony are in the elements of nature, that, "the element of air was as certainly ordained to give us harmonious sounds in due measure, as to give respiration to the lungs." God has

given us "music in the air, as he hath given us wine in the grape;" leaving it to man to draw forth the rich melody, as well as to extract the inspiriting juice, but designing that both should be employed to his glory, and used in his service. Wine was eminently consecrated for religion, when chosen as the sacramental representation of the precious blood of the Redeemer; and a holy distinction ought never to be denied to music, whilst the Psalmist, speaking undoubtedly by the Spirit of God, exclaims, "Praise him with stringed instruments and organs; praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals."

It is not, however, instrumental music which is mentioned in the text. "They sang an hymn." There is another remarkable instance recorded in the New Testament of God's praises having been sung at a strange time, and in a strange place. Paul and Silas, thrust into the inner prison at Philippi, and with their feet made fast in the stocks, had recourse to singing, as though their condition had been prosperous, and their spirits elated. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them." They were not content with reminding each the other of the goodness of God, with speaking of his greatness and loving-kindness: "they sang praises unto God;" and that, too, with so loud a voice, that the other prisoners heard them, though confined in the remotest parts of the dungeon. In like manner, Christ and his Apostles "sang an hymn:" they were not satisfied with repeating an hymn; and we may certainly gather from this, that God's praises ought to be sung rather than spoken, that singing is the more appropriate vehicle, even when circumstances may be such as to make music seem almost out of place.

It may, we think, fairly be said that the power of singing has not been sufficiently considered as one of the Creator's gifts to his creatures, and, therefore, intended to be used to his glory. We recognize this fact in regard of the power of speech: we acknowledge that God must have endowed man with the faculty of uttering articulate sounds, and have clothed his tongue with language; and we con-

\* Jones, of Nayland.

ness that this very fact renders us responsible, in a high sense, for our words, and destroys all surprise that words are to be made a criterion at the last. A noble gift is abused, whensoever an idle word is spoken: why then should we marvel at the assertion of our Lord, "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment?" "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

But, to quote again from the writer already referred to,\* "the faculty, by which the voice forms musical sounds, is as wonderful as the flexure of the organs of speech in the articulation of words." Considered as the result of certain mechanical arrangements, singing is perhaps even more marvellous than speaking, or gives a stronger witness to the skill and the power of the Creator. This is not the place for bringing proof of such assertion; but they, who have considered the human throat as a musical instrument, and have examined, on this supposition, its structure and capacity, declare that it presents "such a refinement on mechanism as exceeds all description." And we are not to doubt that God gave this faculty to man, that he might employ it on his praises. The Psalmist having said, "Awake, psaltery and harp," exclaims, "I myself will awake early:" it did not content him, that instruments of music should start from their silence, and give forth the slumbering harmony; he regarded himself as an instrument more curious, and more costly, than any framed by a human artificer; and, therefore, would he too awake and swell with his voice the tide of melody.

But singing, like music in general, has been too much given up by the Church to the world; it has not been sufficiently considered, and cultivated, as designed for religious ends, and helpful to religious feelings. And hence, for the most part, our psalmody is discreditable to our congregations; it is either given over to a few hired singers, as though we were to praise God by deputy; or is left with the children of the national schools, as though, in growing older, we had less cause for

thankfulness. Let me say that the efforts which are now being systematically made throughout the country to teach our population to sing, should be regarded with great interest and pleasure by the christian. Such efforts have a more immediate bearing than is, perhaps, commonly thought, on the national piety. I do not merely mean that there is a humanizing power in music, and that the poor, taught to sing, are likely to be less wild, and less prone to disorder, and therefore more accessible to the ministrations of religion. Not, indeed, that I would make no account of this, for I thoroughly believe that, in improving the tastes of a people, you are doing much for their moral advancement. I like to see our cottagers encouraged to train the rose and the honeysuckle round their doors, and our weavers, as is often the fact, dividing their attention between their looms and their carnations; for the man who can take care of a flower, and who is all alive to its beauty, is far less likely than another, who has no delight in such recreations, to give himself up to gross lusts and habits. But, independently on this, if singing were generally taught, the psalmody in our churches could not fail to be generally improved. And I am quite sure that this could not take place without, by the blessing of God, a great spiritual benefit. When many voices join heartily in prayer, it is hardly possible to remain undevout; when many voices join heartily in praise, it is hardly possible to remain indifferent. Every one feels this. In a congregation, where the responses are generally left to the clerk and the children, how difficult is it to pray! whereas, if the majority join, one is drawn in almost unconsciously, and cannot keep back his cordial amen. Thus, also, in a congregation where few attempt to sing, how difficult it is to magnify the Lord! but who can resist the rush of many voices? whose bosom does not swell, as old and young, rich and poor, mingle their notes of adoration and thankfulness?

You may tell me that there is not necessarily any religion in all this emotion. I know that; and I would not have you mistake emotion for religion. But we are creatures so constituted as to be acted on through our senses and

\* Jones.

feelings; and whilst emotion is not religion, it will often be a great step towards it. The man who has imbibed, so to speak, the spirit of prayer and of praise from the surrounding assembly, is far more likely to give an attentive ear to the preached word, and to receive from it a lasting impression, than another whose natural coldness has been increased by that of the mass in which he found himself placed. In teaching, therefore, a people to sing with the voice "the songs of Zion," we cannot but believe that, God helping, much is done towards teaching them to sing with the understanding and the heart. A faculty is developed, which God designed for his glory, but which has, comparatively, been allowed to remain almost useless. Yes, a faculty which God designed for his glory; and, if so designed, it cannot lie idle without injury, nor be rightly exercised without advantage. And I seem to learn, from our text, that it is not enough that we praise God with speech. Christ and his Apostles "sang an hymn," ere "they went out into the Mount of Olives." What had music, cheerful and animated music, to do with so sad and solemn an occasion? Nay, there is music in heaven: they who stand on the

"sea of glass mingled with fire," have "the harps of God" in their hands: "they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:" why then should music ever be out of place with those whose affections are above?

It would not be out of place in the chamber of the dying believer. He has just received, through the holy mystery of the Eucharist, the body and the blood of his blessed Redeemer. And now his own failing voice, and the voices of relatives and friends, join in chanting words which the church directs to be either said or sung, as the conclusion of the sacramental service: "Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, good-will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty." Wonder ye, that, when there was the option either to say or to sing, they chose the singing at such a moment? Nay, they all felt that they had a rough hill to climb; and they remembered, that, when Christ and his Apostles had finished their last supper, "they sang an hymn," and then "went out into the Mount of Olives."

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## SERMON V.

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### CÆSAR'S HOUSEHOLD.

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"All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."—Philippians, 4 : 22.

The earlier ages of the church seem to have been distinguished by a love which made all christians regard themselves as members of one family. The saying of our Lord, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if

ye have love one to another," appears to have been successfully taken as furnishing their rule of conduct; for "See how these christians love one another," was the common remark of enemies and persecutors.



And the observable thing is, that the love of which we speak was actually the love of christians as christians, irrespective altogether of other claims upon affection. The moment a man embraced christianity, he was regarded as a brother, and felt to be a brother, by the whole christian body: a thousand hearts at once beat kindly towards him; and multitudes, who were never likely to see him in the flesh, were instantly one with him in spirit. It may admit of great doubt whether there be much, in our own day, of that which thus distinguished the beginning of christianity. The love of christians because they are christians, no regard being had to country or condition—is this still a strongly marked characteristic of those who profess themselves the disciples of the Redeemer? There was something very touching and beautiful in Christ's promise to such as should forsake all for his sake: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive a hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands." How was such a promise fulfilled, except that they, who had been cast out for their religion from their own families and possessions, found themselves admitted at once into a new household, and endowed with new property, even the household and the property of the whole christian community? For every natural relation whom they had lost, they obtained instantly a hundred spiritual; and the goods of which they had been spoiled, returned to them, a thousand-fold multiplied, in the possessions of those who received them as children and brethren. Thus was strikingly verified a description long before given of God by the Psalmist: "He setteth the solitary in families"—for they who were to all appearance abandoned, left orphaned and alone in the world, found themselves surrounded by kinsmen.

But it is only, we fear, in a very limited sense, that the like can be affirmed of the christians of our own day. Yet the criterion of genuine christianity remains just what it was: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the

brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." In our own time the ends of the earth are being wondrously brought together: there is an ever-growing facility of communication between country and country; and this must rapidly break down many barriers, and bring far-scattered tribes into familiar intercourse. In earlier times, nation was widely divided from nation: the inhabitants of different lands were necessarily almost strangers to each other; and you could not have expected an approximation to universal brotherhood. But then it was, in the face of all obstacles to personal communion, that the spirit of christianity showed its comprehensive and amalgamating energies: the name of Christ was as a spell to annihilate distance; to plant the cross in a land, sufficed to make that land one with districts removed from it by the diameter of the globe. Alas for the colder temper of modern times! We have made paths across the waters, we have exalted the valleys, we have brought low the hills, so that we can visit every region, and scarce seem to leave our home; but where is that glowing and ample charity, which would throb towards christians whom we have never seen, and make us feel that our own household includes the far off and the near, all who worship the same God, and trust in the same Mediator?

We have been led into these remarks, from observing, in the apostolical writings, the affectionate greetings which the members of one church send to those of another. For the most part, these churches had no intercourse the one with the other; they were widely separated by situation; and, had it not been for the bond of a common faith, their members would have been as much strangers as though they had belonged to different orders of being. And yet you would judge, from the warm remembrances, the kindly messages, which pass between them, that they were associated by most intimate relationship, that they were friends who had spent years together, or kinsmen who had been brought up beneath the same roof. When St. Paul wrote thus to the Colossians, "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and

for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh," you would have thought, from the energy of his expressions, that it must have been for some dear and long-tried acquaintance that he was thus deeply interested, had he not immediately described the objects of his solicitude, as those who had not seen his face in the flesh. And, in like manner, when you read the salutations sent by one church to another, the warm and cordial greetings, you would conclude that these churches had held familiar intercourse, that their members had conversed much together, and mingled in the intimacies of life, if you did not know, from other sources of information, that they were strangers to each other, except as all belonging to Christ's mystical body. So strong a link of association was christianity then felt to be! Christians knew that there were christians in distant lands, whom they were never likely to visit, and who were never likely to visit them—but what mattered it, that they were not to see one another in the flesh? They were grafted into the same vine, they were washed in the same blood, they were quickened by the same Spirit; and feeling, therefore, as though one mother had born them, and one home sheltered them, they poured forth hearty salutations, and multiplied expressions of the very tenderest affection.

It was thus with the Romans and the Philippians. They were widely removed the one from the other; and probably there had been little or no personal intercourse between the members of the churches. Yet you find, from our text, that the christians at Rome felt kindly towards the christians at Philippi, and charged St. Paul with their sentiments of esteem and good-will. "All the saints salute you"—not, you observe, a few of the most distinguished, of those who had advanced farthest in the charity enjoined by the Gospel—but "all the saints salute you." O blessed estate of a Christian Church, when every member had a cordial greeting to send to persons whom he had never beheld, but whom he loved, as loving the Savior with himself.

You will, however, naturally sup-

pose that we selected our present text not so much as containing the general salutation of one church by another, as on account of its marking out certain individuals as specially earnest in their greetings. "All the saints salute you; chiefly, they that are of Cæsar's household." There was a friendly salutation from all the members of the Roman Church; but the most friendly issued from those who appertained to the household of Cæsar. And we consider this as an intimation which ought not to be cursorily passed over. We think that truths and lessons of no common interest may be drawn from this brief reference to the christians who were to be found in the imperial circle. We design, therefore, to confine ourselves to the examining this reference, to the endeavoring to discover what it may imply, and what it may enjoin. We are aware, that, at first, it will probably appear to you a barren statement, the announcement of a simple fact, on which no comment is needed, and from which little, if any, instruction can be drawn. But if you would read the Bible with this rule in mind, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," you would find that nothing is stated which could be omitted without loss; and that often, where there is least to strike the superficial reader, there is most to repay the diligent student. Without then further preface, and without proposing any plan of discourse, which might perhaps only impede our inquiries, we ask your attention, whilst endeavoring to show what truths and lessons are furnished by the information that there were saints in the household of Cæsar, and that these were foremost in greeting the saints at Philippi.

Now you are to observe that the throne of the Cæsars was at this time occupied by Nero, a monster rather than a man, whose vices and cruelties will make his name infamous to the very end of the world. Certainly, if ever there was an atmosphere uncongenial to christianity, it may be supposed to have been that of the court and palace of this bloody debauchee. It ordinarily happens that the charac-



ter of the prince gives the tone to that of his courtiers and attendants; and it would therefore be hardly imaginable that the household of a Nero was not composed in the main of the fierce and the dissolute. And it should further be observed, that there was a direct hostility to christianity on the part of the emperor; he became eventually a most bitter persecutor of the christians, and St. Paul himself perished by his sword. Where, then, on all human calculation, was there less likelihood of the Gospel gaining footing than in the court and household of Nero? Yet so true was St. Paul's assertion, that the weapons of his warfare were "mighty through God to the casting down of strong-holds," that there were men of Cæsar's household worthy the high title of saints; men not secretly, but openly, christians; not ashamed of their professions, but willing to give it all publicity by sending greetings to christians in other cities of the earth. And our first inquiry will naturally be, as to the agency which brought round so unlikely a result; how it came to pass, that an entrance was achieved, and a firm footing gained for christianity, where there might have seemed a moral impossibility against its admission, or, at all events, its settlement? Your minds will naturally turn, in answer to this inquiry, to the miraculous gifts with which St. Paul was endowed, to the credentials which he was enabled to furnish of the divine origin of christianity, and to the power and persuasiveness with which he set forth its doctrines. You will remember with what noble intrepidity he rose up before the sages of Greece, and won over even proud philosophy by his reasoning and eloquence; and you will further call to mind, how, when he spake unflinchingly to Felix, the slave of base lusts, the haughty Roman trembled, as though the judgment had already been upon him with its terrors. And whilst there are these registered achievements of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, you think it quite intelligible that he should have made proselytes even from the household of Nero: you perhaps imagine him working some great miracle, in order to compel the attention of the emperor and his court,

and then preaching, with a more than human oratory, the Gospel of Christ, till slumbering consciences were startled, and bold vices abashed.

Indeed you do right in thus ascribing extraordinary power to the miracles and sermons of St. Paul: we could have felt no surprise, supposing this Apostle to have had opportunities of audience, had even Nero trembled like Felix, and had converts been won from the courtiers of Rome, as well as from the philosophers of Athens. But, nevertheless, in this instance the explanation utterly fails: St. Paul was now a prisoner, kept in close confinement; and, though allowed to receive those who came unto him, was not at liberty, as at other times, to labor openly and vigorously at propagating the Gospel. He could not go, as you have supposed him, like Moses and Aaron, with the rod in his hand, and compel by his miracles the attention of a profligate king, and then deliver, in the name of the living God, the message of rebuke and the prophecy of vengeance. And yet it was at this very time, when the chief instrument in the diffusion of christianity seemed comparatively disabled, that the great triumph was won, and the imperial household gave members to the church. Nay, and more than this, it appears to have been actually in consequence of his being a prisoner for the faith, rather than a preacher of the faith, that St. Paul was instrumental to the obtaining this victory. If you refer to the commencement of this Epistle to the Philippians, you will find the Apostle ascribing to his imprisonment the very result of which we are now seeking the cause. He expresses himself fearful lest the Philippians should have thought that the afflictions with which he had been visited, had impeded the progress of the Gospel. He assures them that quite the contrary effect had been produced: "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which have happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places." Thus, you see, it was not by his sermons, it was literally by his bonds, that the attention of the court had been attracted to christianity: it was as a



captive that he had mastered rulers, and with his chain that he had struck off their fetters. In the following verse he adds another statement as to the efficaciousness of his bonds: "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." Hence there were two ways, as it would appear, in which his bonds gave enlargement to christianity. The patience and meekness with which he submitted to long and unjust confinement, drew public attention, and compelled men to feel that, where there was such willingness to suffer, there must be the consciousness of advocating truth. And then the supports and consolations which were ministered to him by God, taught other christians that they could not be losers through intrepidity in preaching the Gospel, and therefore nerved them to greater energy in the work from which Paul himself was temporarily withdrawn. In these ways were the Apostle's bonds influential; so that when, to all appearance, he was able to do least, when his power of usefulness seemed the most limited, then was it that he won admission for christianity into the circle from which you would have thought it most surely excluded.

We cannot but think that a great lesson was thus given, as to God's power of overruling evil for good, of producing the most signal results when the employed instrumentality appears the least adequate. How apt are we to imagine, when a man is overtaken by sickness, or withdrawn, through one cause or another, from more active duty, that his period of usefulness has closed! How ready are we to lament over what we call a mysterious dispensation, as the Roman christians may have done over the imprisonment of St. Paul! But who shall say that it does not often come to pass, that the minister preaches far more effectually from his sick-bed, than ever he did from his pulpit? The report, which goes forth amongst his people, of the patience with which he bore pain, and the calmness with which he met death, will perhaps do more towards overcoming their resistance to the Gospel, than all his energy effected, whilst he gave himself night and day to the

bringing them to repentance. Or again, was it whilst they were free to move through a land, and to wrestle boldly with prevailing errors and superstitions, that martyrs and confessors did most for the cause of God and of truth? Was it not rather when they were actually in the clutches of the persecutor, pining in dungeons, or dragged to the scaffold? The flame which consumed them, prevailed most to the scattering the spiritual darkness; and their dust was as seed whence moral verdure sprang. Oh, let no one ever think, that, because unable to exert himself openly and actively, as he once did, for God, he has no duties to perform, no services to render, no rewards to secure. A true christian is never, if we may use a common expression, laid by: God makes use of him in sickness and in health, in life and in death. And the influence which proceeds from him, when languishing on his couch, reduced to poverty, or overwhelmed with affliction, is often incomparably greater than when, in the fulness of his strength, with every engine at his disposal, he moved amongst his fellowmen, and took the lead in each benevolent enterprise. It is on sick-beds that the sustaining power of christianity is most displayed: it is amid multiplied troubles that its professed comforts are put to the proof: it is by dying men that its best promises are shown to have been indeed made by God. And even when the grave has closed upon a righteous man, is it not often true that "he, being dead, yet speaketh?" His memory admonishes and encourages, and that, too, more powerfully than even his living example.

Let no one, then, conclude himself disabled from doing God service, because he can no longer perform active duties, nor take visible part in advancing Christ's kingdom upon earth. Resignation has its victories as well as intrepidity: converts may be made through meekness in trial, as well as through boldness in enterprise. And if we would reconcile ourselves to the apparent suspension of our usefulness; if we would learn that God may be employing us most, when he seems to have most withdrawn us from employment; let us ponder the fact brought before us by our text. I think upon Rome, the

metropolis of the world, upon the haughty Cæsars, giving laws to well nigh all the nations of the earth. O that christianity might make way into the imperial halls! I should feel as though it were indeed about to triumph over heathenism, were it to penetrate the palace of Nero. And then I hear that St. Paul is approaching towards Rome—St. Paul, who has carried the Gospel to the east and west, the north and south, and every where made falsehood quail before truth. My expectations are raised. This great champion of christianity may succeed where there is most to discourage, and gain over Nero's courtiers, if not Nero himself. But then I hear that St. Paul comes as a prisoner: I see him used as a criminal, and debarred from all opportunity of publishing the Gospel to the illustrious and powerful. My hopes are destroyed. The great Apostle seems to me completely disarmed; and the picture which I had fondly drawn of christianity growing dominant through God's blessing on his labors, disappears when I behold him detained in captivity. Alas for human short-sightedness and miscalculation! Never again let me dare reckon God's servants least powerfully, when least visibly instrumental in promoting his cause. St. Paul is a prisoner; St. Paul cannot go boldly to the court, and preach to the mighty; but, in less than two years, he is able to declare, "My bonds are manifest in all the palace," and to enumerate amongst the saints, who send greetings to the Philippians, "chiefly them that are of Cæsar's household."

We go on to observe to you—and the observation is of prime importance—that a man cannot be placed in circumstances so disadvantageous to piety as to put it out of his power to give heed to the duties of religion. We have already spoken to you of the character of Nero, and of the profligacy which must have deformed his household and court. We have admitted that, if ever there were an atmosphere uncongenial to christianity, it must have been that of the Roman court, with such an emperor at its head. We could not have been surprised, had the religion of Jesus striven in vain for admission; and it was the little appa-

rent likelihood of there being saints in the household of Cæsar, which suggested the foregoing inquiry as to the instrumentality through which the Gospel succeeded in making these converts. But, nevertheless, the converts were made, and that too, you are carefully to remember, not through any extraordinary agency, seeing that the employed preaching was not that of St. Paul, but only of subordinate ministers. Certainly such an instance as this should show the worthlessness of an excuse with which men would sometimes palliate their neglect of religion—that they are exposed to such temptations, surrounded by such hinderances, or liable to such opposition, that it is vain for them to attempt the great duties of repentance and faith. We challenge any man to show that he is more unfavorably circumstanced than the members of Nero's household must have been. We challenge him to show any likelihood that the profession of religion would expose him to greater dangers, bring on him more obloquy, or cause severer loss, than might have been expected to follow the exchange of heathenism for christianity, by those who bore office in the Roman emperor's court. And whilst we have before us full evidence, that even the servants of Nero could overcome every disadvantage, and "shine as lights" in the church of the Redeemer, we can never admit that the temporal circumstances of any man disqualify him for the being a true christian, or put such obstacles in his way as excuse his not advancing to eminence as a believer.

We readily acknowledge that more appears done for one man than for another; that some circumstances may be said to conduce to the making men pious, whilst others increase the difficulty of separation from the world, and consecration to God. But we can be certain, from the known strength of divine grace, and its sufficiency to all the ends of the renewal and perfecting of our nature, that, under every possible disadvantage, there may be a striving with evil, and a following after good, in obedience to the precepts, and in hope of the recompences, of the Gospel. We will not, at present, discuss whether it be a man's duty, when he feels his circumstances unfa-



avorable to personal religion, to labor to escape from those circumstances; whether the courtier should flee the court where there are incitements to evil, the merchant the traffic which burdens him with cares, or the servant the household where godliness is held in contempt. We may find opportunity hereafter of treating this point; we now only say, that the case may often be one in which there is no escape from the circumstances which make piety difficult, and in which the duty of remaining in the disadvantageous position may be as clear as that of struggling against its disadvantages. But we contend that, whensoever such is the case, it is no apology for an individual's continuing void of personal religion, that he would have great difficulties to wrestle with in becoming religious. The individual may fasten on these difficulties, and urge them in excuse, when conscience admonishes him as to the great duties of godliness. But the excuse will not bear investigation; forasmuch as it assumes that God has put it out of the man's power to provide for his soul's safety in eternity; and to assume this is to contradict the Divine word, and throw scorn on the Divine attributes.

We take, for example, the instance most naturally suggested by our text, that of a servant in an irreligious family. We have great sympathy with persons so circumstanced: we count their situation one of no common difficulty. Their superiors set them a bad example, an example of sabbath-breaking, of neglect of all religion, and, perhaps, even of undisguised vice. Few opportunities are afforded them of attending public worship; and they have but little time for private devotion. If inclined to give heed to religion, they cannot but perceive that any indication of piety would perhaps lose them the favor of their master, and bring upon them the ridicule of their associates. We say again that we have great sympathy with an individual thus situated: we feel that he has more than a common battle to fight, if he stand forth as a candidate for immortality. But there is nothing in his position to make it impracticable that he become truly religious, nor excusable that he defer the season of providing for the soul.

Be his difficulties what they may, we can be confident that they would rapidly disappear before the earnest resolve of seeking "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." He has but to begin, and presently would he find that obstacles, which appeared insurmountable, are gradually lowered, and that, if he have to encounter all which he dreaded, it is in a strength which grows with the exigence. What we fear for this man, when we know him plied with the remonstrances of conscience, it is not that, if he set himself fearlessly to regulate his conduct by the revealed will of God, he may find that he has not time enough for religion, or that the trials of his station are too great to be surmounted; it is only that he may shield himself behind his confessed disadvantages, and hold himself blameless in not making an attempt, where the likelihood of success seems so slight. We would come down upon him, in his moment of indecision, when conscience is rebuking his neglect of the one thing needful, and when he strives to parry the rebuke, by asking how he can attend to religion whilst the very air which he breathes seems impregnated with wickedness? We will hear nothing of an impossibility. Time may be made, prayer may be offered, the Bible may be read, vice may be forsaken, contempt may be braved, and the Spirit of the living God fails no man who is not false to himself. And if he plead the ungodliness of the family in which he is placed, and maintain it not to be expected that righteousness should be acquired, where there is every thing to fasten down a man to evil, we require of him to go with us in thought to the household of Nero. We tell him of the depravity of that scourge and disgrace of humankind, we describe to him the fierce profligacy which pervaded his court: we show him how it was like rushing into the flames, then and there to embrace christianity: and we leave him to think, if he dare, that any scene, or association, can excuse the neglect of religion, when St. Paul could single out, from the whole mass of Roman christians, "chiefly them that were of Cæsar's household."

We proceed to what we reckon the most important of the remarks which



we have to offer on the passage which forms our subject of discourse. You will observe that the saints, of whom St. Paul speaks in the text, not only belonged to Cæsar's household at the time of their conversion to christianity, but remained in that household after their conversion. It is evident that they did not feel it their duty to abandon the stations in which Providence had placed them, and seek others apparently more favorable to the growth of religion. And we may conclude that their decision was right, for, having direct intercourse with St. Paul, who could furnish them with rules of conduct derived immediately from God, we cannot doubt that they did what ought to have been done. So that it does not at all follow that a man is to withdraw himself from circumstances of danger and difficulty, and strive to place himself in a condition where there shall be less temptation or opposition. We cannot, indeed, think that a converted man would be justified in seeking employment where he knew that it would be specially difficult to cultivate religion: but we can believe that he might be justified in retaining his employment, supposing him thus placed at the time of conversion. To desert his employment, because it made religion difficult, would be to declare that the grace, which had converted him, in spite of disadvantages, would not suffice to the establishing and perfecting him; and thus would his first step mark a distrust of God's Spirit, which would augur but ill for his after progress. If an employment were in itself sinful, if it actually could not be carried on without sin, there would be no room for debate; it must be abandoned at once, though utter destitution might seem the inevitable consequence. But if the employment be only dangerous, if it only require a greater measure of circumspection, vigilance, and boldness, the forsaking it may prove timidity rather than prudence; a disposition to evade, rather than to conquer.

We doubt, for example, whether a man, roused to the great work of the saving the soul, could lawfully seek to place himself in the midst of the temptations of a court, and surround himself with those hinderances to spiritual

religion which too often abound in the palaces of princes. But it would make all the difference if he were a courtier at the time of his being first made to feel that he had a soul: a court is a lawful, though a dangerous, residence; and it may not only be allowable, it may even be required, that he should continue where he is, and take advantage of his position to adorn and diffuse christianity. It might not look like a saint to seek employment in the household of Cæsar; but it may be the very part of a saint not to withdraw from the household, and descend into humble life. A religious servant might not be justified in wilfully entering an irreligious family, where he knew that piety would be discountenanced in every possible way; but if he have become religious whilst serving in the irreligious family, it may be lawful for him to remain, nay, it may be unlawful for him to leave: it is lawful for him to remain, if he be not required to act against his conscience; it is unlawful for him to leave, if distinct opportunity be afforded him of doing honor to God, and promoting Christ's cause. And this latter supposition will probably hold good in the majority of cases. When one member of an irreligious household is converted, we regard him as the particle of leaven, placed by God in the midst of an unsound mass; and the circumstances must be very peculiar, which would seem to us to warrant the withdrawal of this particle, so that the mass should be again void of any righteous element.

We have great pleasure in contemplating the moral power with which God has invested the meanest of his people. It is too common to judge power by station, and to compute the influence which a man may exert over others, by the temporal advantages which fall to his lot. But there is a power in religion, irrespective altogether of worldly station: a power which may indeed be used more extensively, if its possessor have command of other forces besides, but which may work the very finest results, supposing him to have nothing else to wield. We refer chiefly to the power of a consistent example; and we should confidently say to the religi-

ous servant in the irreligious family, that it is hardly possible to overrate the service which he, or she, may render to the cause of christianity. We are not supposing the servant to travel beyond the immediate duties of his station, for it is no recommendation of religion when persons put themselves forward, and assume offices to which they have never been called. We only suppose the servant to carry his christianity in all his occupations, and this will be sure to make him the most respectful, faithful, and diligent in the domestic establishment. He will be quickly distinguished from others by closer attention to his master's interests, by greater care of his master's property, by a stricter adherence to truth, and by a more obliging and submissive deportment. It is nothing to tell us that, often, where there is a religious profession, there are few or none of these characteristics; this is only telling us that hypocrisy is confined to no class of life, but may flourish equally in the kitchen and parlor. Let there be real religion, and whatever a man's station, it will show itself in the performance of the duties of that station. The rule admits no exceptions, for religion seats itself in the heart, and thence influences all the actions. Therefore, if there be one, in a mass of irreligious domestics, whom the Spirit of God has brought to repentance and faith, that one will rapidly distinguish himself from the rest by superior civility, diligence and honesty.

And it is just because true religion will thus necessarily display itself in the practice, that we ascribe to it a power, in every rank of life, of acting silently upon others, and assimilating them to itself. Let the irreligious master perceive that there is no one in his household so trustworthy as the professed disciple of Christ, no one on whose word he can place such dependence, no one who serves him with equal industry and alacrity; and it can hardly fail but that this master will gradually receive an impression favorable to religion, whatever may have been hitherto his opposition and prejudice. There is something mightily ennobling in this; for the meanest in a household, whose days are consumed

in the lowest drudgeries of life, is thus represented as invested with a high power of winning triumphs for christianity, and turning many to righteousness. There may be families to which the preacher of the Gospel can gain no access; they will not come to listen to him on the Sabbath, and would scowl on him as an intruder in the week. And what instrumentality is there, through which to act on such families, barred up, as they are, against both the public and the private ministrations of the word? Nothing would be so hopeful as the instrumentality of pious domestics; and, therefore, God forbid that such domestics should hastily withdraw themselves from the households. We look to the pious servant to do what the minister of the Gospel has no opportunities of doing, to publish and recommend the doctrine of Christ, not by officious interference, and unbecoming reproof, and unasked for advice; but by blamelessness of conduct, by devotedness to duty, by fidelity, by humility, by obligingness. We send that servant as our missionary into the very midst of the inaccessible family; not to deliver messages with his lip, but to deliver them through his life; and we can almost venture to predict, that if he do indeed, according to St. Paul's direction to servants, "adorn the doctrine of God the Savior in all things," it will gradually come to pass that religion conciliates some measure of respect, that those above him, and around him, inquire into his motives, and perhaps even seek for themselves what works so beautifully in another.

But if we may fairly contend that such an influence as this is wielded by a righteous domestic in an unrighteous family, we can feel no surprise, that, when God had won to himself servants from amongst the servants of Nero, he permitted, and perhaps even commanded, their remaining in the service of the profligate emperor. Who knows whether there may not, at first, have been a solitary convert, one who held but a mean place in the imperial household, and who may have desired to escape at once from a scene where there seemed to be so many by whom he might be injured, so few to whom he could do good? But he may

have been admonished to remain; and by the mere force of a consistent deportment, he may have borne down much of the opposition to christianity, till at last, though he prevailed not to the bringing over the bloody emperor himself, he was surrounded by a goodly company of believers, and a church of the Redeemer rose in the very midst of the palace of the Cæsars. And whether or not it were thus, through the influence of a solitary convert, that the religion of Jesus established itself in the most unpromising scene, the great truth remains beyond controversy, that a post is not to be forsaken because it cannot be occupied without peril to personal piety. Let, therefore, any amongst yourselves, who may be disposed to abandon the station in which God has placed them, because of its dangers and trials, consider whether they may not have been thus circumstanced for the very purpose of being useful to others; and whether, then, it does not become them to persist in hope, rather than to desert it in fear. For very difficult would it be to show that any can have more cause to seek a change of service, than men converted from amongst the courtiers and domestics of Nero; and, nevertheless, these christians, with an apostle for their immediate instructor, adhered steadfastly to the employments in which conversion had found them; so that they were to be known by the striking description, "The saints that are of Cæsar's household."

But we have not yet exhausted the instructive truths which seem fairly deducible from the simple statement of our text. We felt, as we insisted on the last lesson—the lesson as to the duty of remaining in a perilous position—that some might feel as though we required them to injure themselves for the benefit of others; and when it is the soul which is at stake, there may be doubts whether a sacrifice such as this can be lawful. We maintained it to be right that Cæsar's household should not be deserted by the saints, because those saints, by remaining there, might be instrumental to the conversion of others to christianity. But, surely, it is a christian's first duty to give heed to his own growth

in grace; how then can it be right that, with the vague hope of benefiting others, he should continue amongst hinderances to his own spiritual advancement?

Brethren, of this we may be certain, that, wheresoever God makes it a man's duty, there will he make it his interest to remain. If he employ one of his servants in turning others from sin, he will cause the employment to conduce to that servant's holiness. Is there no indication of this in the words of our text? We lay the emphasis now upon "chiefly," "chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household." Of all the Roman christians, the foremost in that love, which is the prime fruit of the Spirit, were those who were found amongst the courtiers and attendants of Nero, and who probably remained in his service for the express purpose of endeavoring to promote the cause of the Gospel. Then it is very evident that these Christians sustained no personal injury, but rather outstripped, in all which should characterize believers, others who might have seemed more advantageously placed.

Neither do we feel any surprise at this: it is just the result for which we might have naturally looked. Is it the absence of temptation, is it the want of trial, which is most favorable to the growth of vital christianity? is it, when there is least to harass a christian, to put him on his guard, or keep him on the alert, that he is most likely to become spiritually great? If so, then men were right in former times, who fancied it most for the interest of the soul that they should absolutely seclude themselves from the world, and, withdrawing to some lonely hermitage, hold communion with no being but God. But this we believe to have been an error. The anchorite, who never mixed with his fellow-men, and who was never exposed to the temptations resulting from direct contact with the world, might easily persuade himself of his superior sanctity, and as easily deceive himself. He might suppose his evil passion subdued, his corrupt propensities eradicated, whereas, the real state of the case might be, that the evil passions were only quiet because not solicited, and that the propensities were not urged because there



was nothing to excite them. Had he been brought away from his hermitage, and again exposed to temptation, it is far from improbable that he, who had won to himself a venerated name by his austerities, and who was presumed to have quite mastered the appetites and desires of an unruly nature, would have yielded to the solicitations with which he found himself beset, and given melancholy proof that the strength of his virtue lay in its not being tried. And, at all events, there is good ground for reckoning it an erroneous supposition, that piety must flourish best where least exposed to injury. The household of Cæsar may be a far better place for the growth of personal religion than the cell of a monk: in the one, the christian has his graces put continually to the proof, and this tends both to the discovering and the strengthening them; in the other, there is comparatively nothing to exercise virtue, and therefore may its very existence be only a delusion.

Why then is the courtier to think, that, by making it his duty to remain in the dangerous atmosphere of a court, we require him to sacrifice himself for the benefit of others? or the servant, that, by bidding him stay in the irreligious family, we doom him to the being hindered in the spiritual race? Far enough from this. Let the remaining be matter of conscience, and the advantageousness shall be matter of experience. "The God of all grace," who has promised that his people shall not be tempted above that they are able, will bestow assistance proportioned to the wants. The constant exposure to danger will induce constant watchfulness: multiplied difficulties will teach the need of frequent prayer: the beheld wickedness of others will keep alive an earnest desire, that the earth may be "full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

And why, then, should not personal piety flourish? why should it be stunted? why, rather, should it not be more than commonly vigorous? Oh, let no man think that he cannot be expected to make great progress in religion, because he is obliged to be much in contact with wickedness, because his calling in life is one of great moral danger,

keeping him associated with those who hate good, and employed on what tends to increase worldly-mindedness? It will probably be from situations such as this, that God shall gather into the kingdom of heaven the most eminent of his servants. It may not be from cloistered solitudes, where piety had but little to contend with, that the distinguished ones shall advance when Christ distributes the prizes of eternity—it may rather be from the court, where worldliness reigned; from the exchange, where gold was the idol; and from the family, where godliness was held in derision. Not that there may not be exalted piety where there has not been extraordinary trial. But the extraordinary trial, met in God's strength, which is always sufficient, will be almost sure to issue in such prayerfulness, such faith, such vigilance, such devotedness, as can hardly be looked for where there is but little to rouse, to alarm, and to harass. Therefore, let those be of good cheer, who, if pious at all, must be pious in spite of a thousand hinderances and disadvantages. Let these hinderances and disadvantages only make them earnest in prayer and diligent in labor, and they will prove their best helps in working out salvation. Witness the "chiefly" of our text. There were none in Rome, in whom the flame of christian love was so bright, as in those confined to the most polluted of atmospheres. God appointed them their station: they submitted in obedience to his will: and the result was, that the lamp, which you would have thought must have gone out in so pestilential an air, burnt stronger and clearer than in any other scene.

Look, then, upon your enemies as your auxiliaries, upon your dangers as your guardians, upon your difficulties as your helps. Christian men, and christian women, ye of whom God asks most in asking you to be his servants, for you he reserves most, if, indeed, ye be "faithful unto death." The "chiefly" of the text may be again heard; they who have been first in godliness shall be first in glory: and when Christ is saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," it may be with this addition, "chiefly they that were of Cæsar's household."

## SERMON VI.

## THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

“On that night could not the king sleep; and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.”—Esther, 6 : 1.

It will be necessary for us to enter somewhat minutely into the circumstances connected with what is here mentioned, that you may be prepared for the inferences which we design to draw from the passage. The Book of Esther is among the most interesting of the narratives contained in the Old Testament, furnishing proofs, as remarkable as numerous, of the ever-watchful Providence of God. The king of the vast Persian Empire, of which Judea was at this time a province, had put from him his queen, in a moment of caprice and indignation, and advanced to her place a Jewess, named Esther, remarkable for her beauty, and, as it afterwards appeared, for her piety and courage. This Esther, who had been left an orphan, had been brought up as his daughter by her cousin Mordecai, who, having been “carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity” under Nebuchadnezzar, had obtained some appointment in the royal household at Shushan. The relationship, however, between the two was not generally known; and Mordecai instructed Esther not to avow herself a Jewess, lest the circumstance might operate to her disadvantage. This very concealment appears to have been ordered of God, and had much to do with subsequent events.

The king had a favorite, named Haman the Agagite, a man of boundless ambition and pride, who acquired complete ascendancy over the monarch. Honors and riches were heaped on this minion; it was even ordered, as it would seem, that he should receive the same reverential prostrations as were rendered to the king, and which

appear to have gone beyond mere tokens of respect, and to have been actually of an idolatrous character. Mordecai, whose religion forbade his giving, in any measure, to man what appertained to God, refused to join the other servants of the king in thus honoring Haman, and drew remark upon himself by remaining standing whilst they fell to the ground. Mordecai had been unjustly treated: he had claim to some portion, at least, of the honors conferred upon Haman, though there is no reason to suppose that anger, or envy, had anything to do with his conduct towards the favorite. He had been unjustly treated—for he had discovered a conspiracy, on the part of two of the royal chamberlains, to assassinate the king, and by apprising Esther of the bloody design, had prevented its execution. For this eminent service, however, he had obtained no reward; his merit was overlooked, and he still sat in the gate of the king.

But it sorely displeased Haman that Mordecai refused him the appointed tokens of reverence. It was nothing to this haughty man that he had reached the highest point to which a subject could aspire, so long as he had to encounter a Jew who would not fall prostrate before him. He must have his revenge—but it shall be a large revenge: it were little to destroy Mordecai alone; the reasons which produced the refusal from the individual might operate equally on the thousands of his countrymen: Mordecai then shall perish; but with him shall fall also the whole nation of the Jews.

It was a bold, as well as a bloody scheme, such as could not have been



thought of except under an eastern despotism. Haman, however, knew that the lives of subjects were at the disposal of the king, so that if he could but possess himself of a royal edict against the Jews, he might compass his stern purpose, and exterminate the people. He sets, therefore, to work: but he will be religious in his wholesale massacre; he betakes himself to the casting of lots, that he may ascertain the day of the year most favorable to his project; and the lots—for "the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord"—fixed him to a day eleven months distant, and, by thus delaying his atrocious scheme, gave time for its defeat.

He had no difficulty in obtaining the iniquitous decree from the luxurious and indolent monarch: he simply told him that there was a strange people scattered about his empire, whom it would be well to destroy, and offered to pay a large sum into the royal treasury, to balance any loss which their destruction might occasion. The king, without making the least inquiry, gave Haman his ring, which would authorize any measure which he might choose to adopt; and Haman immediately circulated the sanguinary edict, to the great horror of the Jews, and the consternation of the whole empire. On this, Mordecai took measures for communicating with Esther, apprised her of the ruin which hung over her nation, and urged her to attempt intercession with the king. And whilst Esther was doing all in her power to arrange a favorable opportunity for pleading the cause of her people, there happened the singular circumstance recorded in the text: his sleep went from the king; and in place of sending for music, or other blandishments, to soothe him to repose, he desired to hear portions of the chronicles of the empire. Amongst other things, the account of the conspiracy which Mordecai had discovered, was read to him; this suggested inquiry as to whether Mordecai had been recompensed; this again produced an order for his being instantly and signally honored—an order which, as intrusted to Haman, was but the too certain herald of that favorite's downfall. Things now went on rapidly in favor of the Jews: the villainy of Haman was disclosed to the

king: immediate vengeance followed; and very shortly the people, who had stood within an ace of destruction, had gladness and light in their dwellings, and were all the more prosperous through the defeated plot of their enemies.

Now who can fail to perceive, who can hesitate to confess, the providence of God in the occurrences thus hastily reviewed? From the first, from the advancement of Esther to the throne, a higher than human agency was manifestly at work to counteract a scheme as distinctly foreknown as though God had appointed, in place of only permitting, the sin. The conspiracy of the two chamberlains; the subsequent neglect of Mordecai; the distant season determined by the lot—these were all either ordered, or overruled, by God; and had a part, more or less direct, in frustrating a plot which aimed at nothing less than the extinction of the Jews. But perhaps the most memorable of the evidences of God's special providence is that narrated in the text. There is nothing, indeed, surprising in the mere circumstance that the king passed a sleepless night; it may have arisen from many natural causes; and we are not at all required to hold that there was any thing miraculous, any thing out of the ordinary course, in his finding himself unable to sleep. But if there were nothing expressly done to banish slumber from his eyes, we may safely say that advantage was taken of the sleeplessness of the king, and that it was suggested to him to do what he was little likely to have thought of. How improbable that, as he tossed from side to side, and could not find rest, he should have fancied the being read to out of the chronicles of the empire, a dry narrative it may be, of facts with which he was already well acquainted, and which had little to interest a voluptuary like himself. When Darius had allowed Daniel to be cast into the lions' den, and was "sore displeased with himself" for what he had done, we read that "instruments of music were not brought before him:" as if, under ordinary circumstances, some such means as the cadences of melody would have been used to cheat him into slumber. But Ahasuerus, though the whole history proves him

to have been a thorough sensualist, sent not for music, but for the chronicles of the kingdom; indeed, it was at the prompting of another spirit than his own, or, if it were but the whim of the moment, God made it instrumental to the most important of purposes.

Then, when the chronicles were brought, it was not likely that the part relating to Mordecai would be read. It might have been expected that the reader would turn to portions of the records which were not so well known, as better fitted to divert and interest the king. Besides, it is evident enough that Mordecai was no favorite with the other royal servants; they were disposed to pay court to Haman, and therefore to side with him in his quarrel with this refractory Jew. It was probable, then, that the reader would avoid the account of what Mordecai had done, not wishing that the king should be reminded of his signal, but unrequited, services. Yet, notwithstanding all the chances—to use common language—against the recital of Mordecai's deed, the narrative of this deed was brought before the king, and its effect was an inquiry as to the reward of the man who had been so eminently useful. And thus, by a succession of improbabilities, but not one of those improbabilities so great as to seem to require any supernatural interference, was a result brought round, or at least advanced, which mightily concerned, not only the Jewish nation, but the whole human race; for had the plan of Haman succeeded, and that people been exterminated whence Messiah was to spring, where would have been the promised redemption of this earth and its guilty inhabitants?

It is hardly affirming too much, to affirm that on the sleepless night of the Persian king was made to depend our rescue from everlasting death; at least, and undeniably, the restlessness of the king was one of those instruments through which God wrought in carrying on his purpose of redeeming our race through a descendant from David "according to the flesh." Wonderful, that so simple, so casual a circumstance should have had a direct bearing on the destinies of men from Adam to the very latest posterity! wonderful, that

the disturbed and broken rest of a single individual should have aided the reconciliation of the whole world to God! Let us contemplate the fact with yet closer attention. We wish to impress on you a strong sense of the ever-watchful providence of God, of his power in overruling all things, so that they subserve his fixed purposes, and of the facility wherewith he can produce amazing results, through simple instrumentality. Whither then shall we lead you? Not to any strange or startling scene, where there are clear tokens of Divine interference and supremacy. Come with us merely to the couch of the Persian king, on that night when sleep went from his eyes; and remembering that his sleeplessness was directly instrumental to the defeating the foul plot of Haman, let us consider what facts are established by the exhibition, and what practical lessons it furnishes to ourselves.

My brethren, examine your notions of God, and tell me whether you are not apt to measure the Supreme Being by standards established between man and man. The Divine greatness is regarded as that of some very eminent king: what would be inconsistent with the dignity of the potentate is regarded as inconsistent with the dignity of God; and what seems to us to contribute to that dignity is carried up to the heavenly courts, or supposed to exist there in the highest perfection. We do not say that men are to be blamed for thus aiding their conceptions of Deity by the facts and figures of an earthly estate. Limited as our faculties are, and unsuited to comprehend what is spiritual—confined, moreover, as we are to a material world—it is, in a measure, unavoidable that we should picture God in human shape, or rather, that we should take the standards which subsist among ourselves, and use them in representing, or setting forth, our Maker. But we should often gain a grander and a juster idea of God, by considering in what he differs from men, than by ascribing to him, only in an infinite degree, what is found amongst ourselves. You may picture God as a potentate with boundless resources at his disposal, possessed of universal dominion, and surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand



ministering spirits, each waiting to do his pleasure, and each mighty as that angel of death which prostrated, in a single night, the vast hosts of the Assyrian. There is nothing wrong in this representation of Deity, except that it must come immeasurably short of the reality: it is correct as far as it goes; but when we have heaped figure upon figure, attributing to God every conceivable instrument of power, we have, indeed, depicted him as mighty; in the sense in which an earthly monarch may be mighty; but, virtually, we can have made no approach towards the actual state of that omnipotent Being, who "sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers."

And, after all, it is not by putting unbounded resources at the disposal of God, and representing him as working through stupendous instrumentality, that we frame the highest notions of him as a sovereign or ruler. Keep out of sight the unbounded resources, the stupendous instrumentality; survey him as effecting what he wills through a mean and insignificant agency; and you more separate between the Creator and the creature, and therefore go nearer, it may be, to the true idea of God. There is something sublimer and more overwhelming in those sayings of Scripture, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength;" "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;" than in the most magnificent and gorgeous description of dominion and strength. This is just what the earthly potentate cannot do: he must have causes proportionate to effects, agencies commensurate with results; and it were utterly vain for him to think of ordaining strength from babes and sucklings, of confounding wise things with foolish, or mighty with weak. This is the prerogative of Deity alone; and because in this he is altogether separated from his creatures, therefore is this more a sign or attribute of Deity, than any assemblage of forces which Scripture may mention, or any celestial army which imagination can array.

Observe, then, how wonderful is

God, in that he can accomplish great ends by insignificant means. Christianity, for example, diffused through the instrumentality of twelve legions of angels, would have been immeasurably inferior, as a trophy of Omnipotence, to christianity diffused through the instrumentality of twelve fishermen. When I survey the heavens, with their glorious troop of stars, and am told that the Almighty employs to his own majestic ends the glittering hosts, as they pursue their everlasting march, I experience no surprise: I seem to feel as though the spangled firmament were worthy of being employed by the Creator; and I expect a magnificent consummation from so magnificent an instrumentality. But show me a tiny insect, just floating in the breeze, and tell me, that, by and through that insect, will God carry forward the largest and most stupendous of his purposes, and I am indeed filled with amazement; I cannot sufficiently admire a Being, who, through that which I could crush with a breath, advances what I cannot measure with thought. And is there any thing strained or incorrect in associating with an insect the redemption of the world? Nay, not so. In saving the race whence Messiah was to spring, God worked through the disturbed sleep of the Persian monarch, and the buzz of an inconsiderable insect might have sufficed to break that monarch's repose.

You have another instance in Scripture of an attempt to destroy the chosen seed, and thus to frustrate the promises in which the whole world had interest. It was made by Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who, not content with enslaving and oppressing the Israelites, sought to effect their extinction through destroying all their male children. And when God interfered on behalf of his people, it was with miracle and prodigy, with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm. Every one seems to feel that the agency was here adequate to the exigence: when the very scheme of redemption may be said to have been in jeopardy, no one is surprised, either that God came forth from his solitude clad in his might, or that, interposing in so awful a manner, he should have confounded and scattered his enemies. The interposition

resembled what might have been looked for from an earthly king, who, finding his will obstructed in some province of his empire, should hasten thither with his armies, and subdue by superior might the rebels and antagonists. But when the peril was greater and more immediate, for certainly the project of Haman threatened worse than that of Pharaoh, there was no miracle—no prodigy: swarms of flies did not darken the land, though perhaps a single fly was made use of by God. Yet who does not perceive that herein was the wonderfulness of God more displayed, than in all the supernatural terrors which devastated Egypt? Let it be, that God caused Ahasuerus to be sleepless, or only knew that he would be; that he prompted him to send for the chronicles, or only knew that he would send; that he secretly suggested to the reader what parts to take, or simply foresaw his selection—in either case, what a tissue of insignificant causes is here! but, at the same time, what a Being must that be, who could hang a world on such a web, any thread of which might have been broken by a thought, but not without deranging and dislocating the whole! To have interfered with visible miracle, would have been nothing compared to the thus secretly and silently operating through natural and inconsiderable things. Indeed, it was a display of Deity, when the oppressors of Israel quailed before a power which strewed the earth with ruin, and shrouded the heavens in darkness. But it accords with our notions of greatness, that mighty means should be employed to mighty ends: if God have at his disposal the thunder, the storm, and the pestilence, we marvel not, that, by employing such artillery, he should frustrate the plots of the enemies of his church. Can he dispense with this artillery? can he work without miracles, when some great crisis arrives, and the counsels of Eternity seem on the eve of defeat? Indeed he can. He is too great to find any instrument little. He can work with the insect's wing just as well as with the Archangel's. And, after adoring him, as he passes through Egypt in the chariot of his strength, working out the emancipation of his people by portents and

plagues, I fall before him as yet more amazing in wisdom and power, when I find the bloody purpose of Haman defeated through such instrumentality as this; "The king could not sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles, and they were read before the king."

Now we omitted a circumstance, in our hasty summary of the facts of the history, which ought to be pointed out, that you may thoroughly perceive the workings of divine Providence. At the very moment that the king was listening to the chronicles of the empire, the wicked Haman was standing in the court, waiting for an audience. He had risen early that he might prefer a request to the king, a request for the immediate execution of Mordecai. At the suggestion of his wife, he had caused a gallows to be erected, and now sought the royal permission for hanging the object of his inveterate hatred. Only remember with what facility the king had granted Haman's request, when it asked the destruction of thousands, and you will hardly think it likely that he would have shown any hesitation in consenting to the death of a solitary individual, and that, too, an individual already doomed by the issued decree. And if Mordecai had fallen, it does not indeed necessarily follow that Esther would have failed in her intercession with the king: but it is not too much to suppose that she would have been staggered and paralyzed through the loss of her kinsman and adviser, and perhaps have taken his death as an evidence of the uselessness of resisting the insolent Haman. Mordecai was, humanly speaking, the great obstruction to the execution of Haman's plot; and, this having been removed, unless some new counteracting engines had been set at work by God, the whole nation of the Jews must have simultaneously perished. Thus it was, you perceive, precisely at the critical moment that his sleep went from the king; the sleepless night saved Mordecai, and Mordecai saved the nation. We have not, then, put the case too strongly, in representing the scheme of the redemption of the world as having depended on the restlessness of the monarch of Persia. We do not, of course, mean to say, that, had the king slept



through the night, God would not have employed some other instrumentality in furthering his purpose of mercy towards men. But we have only to do with instrumentality actually employed: and, indeed, it is unbecoming in us even to suppose the case that the king might have slept; for this is to suppose that God's foreknowledge might have been at fault, a contingency having been reckoned upon which had never arisen. It was clearly, therefore, so ordered by Providence, that the deliverance of the Jews, and, with it, the redemption of the world, should hinge on the fact of his sleep going on one particular night from Ahasuerus, the monarch of Persia.

And having already called on you to admire the wonderfulness of God, in that he could operate to so mighty an end through so inconsiderable an agency, we would have you carefully observe how little there was which could be called supernatural interference; how simply, without any violence, the divine Providence effected its purpose. Now that the whole is over, we can clearly trace the hand of God: but, whilst the matter was in progress, we might have discerned nothing but ordinary and every-day events, such as afforded no sign of the interference of Deity. We have not taken on ourselves to decide whether God actually caused, or only foreknew, the king's sleepless night; whether he turned the king's mind towards the chronicles of the empire, or merely foresaw its direction. But let it be supposed, as is sufficiently probable, that there was more than foreknowledge, that God banished sleep from the king's eyes and directed his thoughts to the chronicles, how natural was the whole thing! how little interference was there with the usual course of events! No one could have suspected that a divine agency was at work: it was no way singular that the king should be restless: no miracle was required to explain his choosing to hear the records of his empire: every thing was just what might have equally happened, had matters been left to themselves, in place of having been disposed and directed by God.

We wish you to observe this very carefully, because it goes to the set-

ting under a right point of view the utility of prayer, which is often objected against as though it sought miracles, or expected God to interrupt, at our call, the established course and order of things. The Jews, at the bidding of Esther, had given themselves to fasting and prayer, supplicating of the Almighty that she might be favorably received of the king, and thus enabled to adopt measures for discomfiting Haman. And independently on this set supplication on behalf of the queen, we may be sure, that, no sooner had the edict gone forth which doomed them to death, than the Jews betook themselves to prayer to the God of their fathers, imploring of him that he would vanquish their foes, and not suffer the promises to fail, of which, for centuries, they had been the depository. And perhaps they looked for visible and miraculous interference in answer to their prayers: it had been God's course, in other emergencies, to make bare his arm in defence of his people: might he not now be expected to appear in his terrors, and scatter, by the brightness of his presence, whatsoever had leagued against his church and himself? But they looked in vain, if they looked for sensible evidence that God had not forgotten his covenant: there came no prodigy to sustain their sinking spirits: if Mordecai appeared raised up, as Moses had been, to counsel and lead them in their difficulties; alas! he had not the rod of the law-giver to wave over the land, and make oppressors tremble.

Was God, then, not hearkening to prayer? was he not intending, or preparing, to answer it? Indeed, his ear was open to the cry of his people, and the event sufficiently showed that he had, all along, been working for their safety. But, as though to prove to us that, even in the worst extremity, he may interpose on our behalf, and nevertheless not derange the common order of things; he frustrated the apparently secure plot of Haman without the least approach to a miracle. And do you not perceive what encouragement this affords in the matter of prayer, and how it scatters the objections which numbers would urge? The scorner would tell me of fixed and immutable laws, according to which

things must proceed in regular succession and train: he would persuade me of the utter absurdity of addressing petitions to God, seeing that, if he answer them, it must be by interfering with what is settled and constant, by the working of miracles, which, from their very nature, he cannot often work. But it is a false statement. I do not look for miracle to be wrought in answer to prayer—though, all the while, I thoroughly believe that, were a case to arise in which nothing short of miracle would meet the circumstances of a servant of God, the miracle would not be withheld: stars shall forsake their courses, the sun and the moon shall put on sackcloth, ere any thing shall fail which God has promised to the righteous, and which is needful to their steadfastness or progress. But it is not required that there should be miracle in order to our prayers being granted; neither does the granting them suppose that God is variable, or changes in his purposes. There was no miracle in his causing Ahasuerus to pass a sleepless night: a little heat in the atmosphere, or the buzzing of an insect, might have produced the result; and philosophy, with all its sagacity, rption of the known laws of nature. could not have detected any inter- Neither were God's purposes variable, though it may have actually depended on the importunity of prayer, whether or not the people should be delivered. God's appointment may have been, that he would break the king's sleep if prayer reached a certain intensesness; that he would not break it if it came below that intensesness: and surely, this would accord equally with two propositions—the first, that the divine purposes are fixed and immutable; the second, that, notwithstanding this fixedness and immutability, they may be affected by human petitions, and therefore leave room for importunate prayer.

And thus I am mightily encouraged in all the business of prayer by the broken rest of the Persian king. Comparatively, I should not be encouraged, were I told that what disquieted the monarch had been the standing of a spectre by his bedside, an unearthly form, which, in unearthly accents, had upbraided him with leaving Mordecai unrequited. Here would have been

miracle, a departure from ordinary laws; and I know that such departure must be necessarily rare, and could hardly be looked for in any exigence of mine own. But when I observe that the king's rest was disturbed without any thing supernatural; that all which God had to do in order to arrange a great deliverance for his people, was to cause a sleepless night, but so to cause it that no one could discern his interference; then, indeed, I learn that I may not be asking what the world counts miracle, though I ask what transcends all power but divine. It may be by natural processes that God effects what might pass for supernatural results. Shall I not cry for deliverance from the dungeon into which a tyrant has cast me, or from the tempest which has overtaken me? Shall I be silent, because it were like asking for miracle, to ask that the prison doors might be loosened, or for interruption of the known laws of nature, to entreat that the agitated elements might be hushed? Nay, not so. God, who succored the Jews through giving one man a sleepless night, may, by the dropping of a pin, incline the tyrant to release me, or, by a feather's weight in those laboratories which science never penetrated, repress the rushings of the storm. I am delivered from the dungeon, I am saved from the tempest, without exciting the surprise of the world, because without any palpable derangement of the common order of things; but nevertheless through an express answer to prayer, or a direct interference on the part of the Almighty.

Oh, there is something in this which should be wondrously encouraging to all who feel their insignificance, and can scarce venture to think that the high and glorious God will exert his omnipotence on their behalf. If the registered deliverances, vouchsafed to the church, were all deliverances which had been effected through miracles, we might question whether they afforded any precedent, on which creatures like ourselves could justly rest hope. We dare not think that for us, for our safety or advancement, armed squadrons will be seen on the heavens, or the earth be convulsed, or the waters turned into blood. But look from Israel



delivered from Pharaoh to Israel delivered from Haman, and we are encouraged to believe that God will not fail even us in our extremity, seeing that he could save the people through such a simple and unsuspected process as this: "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles."

But we would now lead you along a train of thought quite different from the preceding, but naturally flowing from the circumstances under review. We wish you again, and more distinctly, to observe, that, even on the supposition that God produced, and did not merely overrule what took place, there was nothing to excite a consciousness of Divine interference: the whole process was so natural that its subject might never have suspected the special workings of God. It cannot for a moment be alleged, that any thing like compulsion was laid upon the king, that his free agency was destroyed, so that he was necessitated, against his will, to adopt a particular course. It was not indeed optional with Ahasuerus whether or not he would be wakeful; neither was it at his own choice, whether or not the thought should cross his mind of sending for the chronicles of the empire; but we may fairly suppose that he could have resisted this thought had he pleased. He might have said to himself, "These chronicles will never soothe me to sleep: I will try something better suited to my purpose"—and thus might he have withstood the impulse, and lost the opportunity of discovering and correcting his faults. We do not of course mean, as we have hinted before, that Haman's plot would not have been defeated, had the king not done according to the suggestion of God. God designed that the plot should be defeated; and he would, therefore, have been sure to bring to bear an adequate instrumentality. But the point under consideration is, that the agency employed on the king was so natural, so undistinguishable from the workings of his own mind, that he could never have suspected a Divine interference, and must have been perfectly at liberty either to do, or not to do, as the secret impulse prescribed.

And in this, my brethren, we have a striking illustration of God's ordinary course in his dealings with men—those dealings, we specially mean, through which he would effect their conversion or renewal. If you examine theoretically into the consistence of human liberty with the operations of Divine grace—if, that is, you seek to show, with thorough precision, that the influences of God's Spirit on our minds in no degree interfere with free agency—it is possible that you will involve yourselves in a labyrinth, and seek vainly for the clue by which you might be extricated. But, practically, there is no difficulty whatsoever in the matter: we may fairly say, that, whilst suggestions are secretly generated, and impulses applied to our minds, we are thoroughly at liberty to act as we choose: it depends on ourselves, on the exercise of our own will, whether the suggestions be cherished or crushed, whether the impulses be withstood or obeyed. And we know nothing of which it is more important that men be aware, than of the naturalness, so to speak, of the Spirit's operations; for many are disposed to wait for what they count supernatural influence—influence which shall palpably not be of this earth, and which shall virtually leave them no freedom of choice. But without denying that cases sometimes occur, in which the operations of the Spirit thus force attention to their origin, it is unquestionable that his ordinary operations are just such as may pass for the workings of our own minds: there is nothing in them to tell us, that we are, at that moment, being subjected to the agency of Omnipotence; nothing to excite the startling conviction, that we are verily wrought upon by that renovating power, which is to mould out of fallen humanity a habitation for Deity himself. And because the operations of the Spirit are commonly not distinguishable from those of our own minds, the danger is very great of their being overlooked or despised; and the duty is, therefore, most pressing, of our being ever on the watch for his suggestions and impulses.

The position of the unconverted man is often precisely that of the king Ahasuerus. There is a restlessness, an un-

casiness, for which he cannot give any definite reason; it has come upon him, he hardly knows whence; and he turns from side to side, expecting to recover his moral indifference or composure. But still his sleep goes from him, and he bethinks him of measures for wooing it back. When he has been similarly situated before, he has perhaps had recourse to the fascinations of the world; he has summoned pleasure with her lyre, and her syren strains have soothed him into quiet. Shall he take the same course now? It would be natural that he should; but he feels a sort of disposition to try another mode; it is secretly suggested to him that the book of the record of the chronicles might give him some repose, that the Bible might hush his agitation, were it read to him by those whose office it is to press home its truths. And thus is he literally situated as was the Persian king on that eventful night, when the fate of the Jews, and of the world, seemed to hang upon a thread. He is acted on as was the king; and there is nothing to prevent his resisting as the king might have resisted. He may say to himself, "The Bible is a dull book, preachers are melancholy persons; I will try something more likely to dissipate my fears, and restore my composure: give me the romance, or the comedy, rather than the book of the chronicles; give me my jovial companions, rather than the ministers of religion." Ahasuerus might have done this, and thereby would he have resisted promptings which were not of his own mind, though they gave no note of supernatural origin, and have lost the opportunity of freeing his kingdom from a great impending calamity. And the sinner may do this: he may withstand a suggestion, which seems only to spring from a disturbed mind, though in truth to be traced to the Spirit of God; and thus may he throw away a golden opportunity of learning how to flee from everlasting wrath.

The special thing forced on the conscience of Ahasuerus through the book of the chronicles, was, that there was one who had done him great service in saving him from death, and whom he had hitherto requited with neglect. And it is the very same thing which

might be forced on the conscience of the sinner through the reading or hearing of the Bible. There is one who has done for him what thought cannot measure, ransoming him, by "the death of the cross," from everlasting pains; but he has hitherto refused to acknowledge this Savior, and has given him, in return, only hatred or contempt. So accurately is a case of most common occurrence, that of the unconverted man moved by God's Spirit to give heed to the Gospel of Christ, portrayed in that of the Persian king, prompted, in his restlessness, to hear the chronicles of the empire. And what we would again and again impress upon you is, that you are not to think of recognizing the operations of the Spirit of God by any supernatural tokens, as though, whensoever that agent is at work in your breasts, you must be aware of his presence, and able to distinguish his movements from those of the conscience and the will. The secret uneasiness, the impulse to prayer, the sense of something wrong, the disposition to hear the word of God—these may not startle you by their strangeness; these may seem to you quite natural, as naturally produced as suggestions of an opposite character—but know ye of a truth, that these are what the Holy Ghost causes; that these may perhaps be all which the Holy Ghost will cause; and, therefore, that if ye will not yield to these, and will not act on these, there is a fearful probability of your being forsaken of God, and left to your own devices. Wait not for miracles—God's ordinary workings are through very simple means. We do not read of any thunderclap which awakened Ahasuerus; he was restless, but perhaps could give no account of his restlessness. If he had been asked, he would probably have mentioned the heat of the weather, or over-excitement, or something of which he had eaten. But, all the while, God was in that sleeplessness, for which so many common causes might have been assigned. And there must be those of you who already know, or who will know, something of a moral uneasiness which might admit of various explanations. There has been no thunderclap—yet the man cannot sleep; and he will perhaps account



for it from some loss in his family, or some disappointment in trade, or some deficiency in health. But God is in that uneasiness, that disquietude, which shows an inability to settle down in present things, and a secret craving for higher and better. Well then—whensoever such a season shall visit any amongst you, let them be specially heedful of what may be suggested to

their minds: they are not disturbed for nothing, but that they may be prompted and urged towards religion—no music, no revelry, no blandishments: let the records of the chronicles of the kingdom of heaven be searched, and they shall learn how the snare may be broken, and beautiful peace be permanently secured.

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## SERMON VII.

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### THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM.

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“And David longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it.”—2 Samuel, 23: 15, 16, 17.

We are not to regard the Scriptural histories as mere registers of facts, such as are commonly the histories of eminent men: they are rather selections of facts, suitableness for purposes of instruction having regulated the choice. In human biography, you may say of much that is recorded, that it is inserted only because it happened, and because, therefore, its omission would have destroyed the integrity of the narrative. But we do not suppose that the same may be said of Scriptural biography; a fact is not recorded merely because it occurred, as though the object were to give the full life of some distinguished individual; a fact is rather chosen for relation, out of many which are omitted, because exhibiting some point, whether in human conduct or the divine dealings, on which it is important that attention be turned.

Occasionally, indeed, and perhaps

more frequently than is commonly thought, it is because the fact has a typical character that it is selected for insertion: it prefigures, or symbolically represents, something connected with the scheme of redemption, and on this account has found place in the sacred volume. Neither is it unusual for the recorded fact to answer to both these descriptions: being instructive in itself, and serving also as an emblem of truths that were then taught only by shadows and types. And whether, in any given instance, it be that the thing narrated is instructive in itself, or significative of what God had yet but partially disclosed; or whether it may lay claim to both characters; we ought, at least, to be careful that we content not ourselves with apprehending the facts, but study diligently what lessons they may convey, and what types they may contain.

We make these general remarks

from a fear that, in regard especially of the Old Testament narratives, there is a habit with many christians of reading Scriptural histories as registers of facts, rather than as collections of lessons. The interesting character of the narratives themselves is often likely to induce or strengthen this habit; the mind becomes so engaged with the story, that the instruction is disregarded, or the figure overlooked. There are others besides children who can be pleased with the fable, and never think of the moral. And if we fail to search the Scriptural narratives for lessons and types, it is evident that we shall practically take away from great part of the Bible its distinctive character as a record of spiritual truth; whilst, on the other hand, by always looking for what always exists—material of instruction—we may give histories the nature of homilies, and find the events in an individual's life prophetic of things in which the whole world has interest.

We hope to show you, as we proceed with our discourse, that the narrative which we have now selected from the Old Testament, forms no exception to the rule, but rather signally illustrates its truth. It is exactly one of those narratives which are likely to be read and admired for the beauty of the facts, rather than studied for the worth of the lessons. It lays immediate and strong hold on the imagination, having about it that air of chivalry, we might almost say romance, which ordinarily so captivates and dazzles the fancy. You can hardly read it and not have before you all the scenery of the tented field, with the mailed champions and the floating banners. The royal warrior, David, is exhausted with the fight; he has been in the thick of the struggle with the Philistines, and is now faint with thirst. In this his weariness and languor, he is heard to breathe a passionate wish for water from the well of Bethlehem, between which and himself lay the Philistines, so that the well could be reached only by breaking through their line. But amongst his followers were men as attached as intrepid; with hearts devoted to their chieftain, and hands prepared to attempt even impossibilities at his bidding. Three of the

most distinguished of these followers heard the wish which David expressed. There was no command given; but with them a wish had the force of a command; and pausing not to count the peril, they rushed against the foe, resolved to carve themselves a passage. It was like rushing on destruction—what will their courage and strength avail against a multitude! they will be borne down in the unequal struggle; and even if they reach the well their retreat will be cut off, and they must perish in the effort to return. And yet—so did the Almighty favor the bold enterprise—they succeeded in breaking through the host: you may trace their course by the stir, the tumult, and the crash; the enemy falls in heaps before them; now they are by the side of the cold flowing fountain: they stay not to quench their own thirst: they dip, it may be, a helmet in the waters, and hasten, with that warrior's cup, to attempt a second time the passage. Perhaps the Philistines scarcely offered fresh resistance; these three men may have seemed to them more than mortal; they may have divided at their approach, and allowed them to return unopposed to the army of Israel.

And David must have been aware of this desperate sally; he must have known that the choicest of his warriors had thrown themselves, to all appearance, on certain death, in hopes of gratifying his wish; and deep must have been his anxieties, and fervent his prayers, for those whom his inconsiderateness had placed in such peril. But the shout of his troops tells him that his brave captains are safe; they approach, stained with the blood of the Philistines, and perhaps with their own: they bow before their king, present the sparkling draught, and ask no reward but the pleasure of seeing him refreshed. And David holds the helmet in his hands, but raises it not to his lips: the thirst consumes him, for it has been aggravated through the feverish dread that the bold men would perish; but the water, fresh and pure though it was, looked to him like the blood of those who had jeopardied their lives; he felt compunction at having rashly given utterance to a wish which had produced so daring a deed;



and he will punish himself for the fault; he refuses to drink, and pours the water on the ground as a libation to the Lord.

What a picture! Every one is familiar with the story of our own warrior, who, mortally wounded, and parched with the death-thirst, received a cup of water, but observing, as he raised it to his lips, the eye of a dying soldier rest wistfully upon it, handed it to him and bade him drink it, as needing it yet more than himself. But we know not whether the history before us do not present a still finer subject for the painter. It does not seem as though David had to choose between quenching his own thirst and that of another. There may have been no gasping warrior at his feet to move sympathy by the glassy eye and the clotted lip. It was simply at the suggestion of conscience that he put from him the longed-for draught; and there was all the more of greatness, because there was apparently so little to prompt the self-denial.

But we need not take pains to give interest and coloring to the narrative. The risk, as we have hinted, is all the other way—that you may be so attracted by the chivalrous circumstances, by the displayed bravery and magnanimity as to think nothing of homely and personal lessons with which the registered incidents are assuredly fraught. We have, therefore, now to engage you exclusively with these lessons. We wish you to observe what there may have been to blame, and what to approve, in the conduct of David; and to note, with like attention, the conduct of his servants. This sufficiently defines what we have to attempt through the remainder of our discourse; we will take, first, the conduct of the three warriors, and, secondly, that of David, and examine what, in each case, there may be whether to condemn or to copy.

Now the three warriors must be surveyed as servants of David, men engaged to obey his commands, and execute his will to the utmost of their power. And their conduct then appears very admirable, as far removed as can well be imagined from that calculating and niggardly obedience, which betrays a disposition to do the least possible,

to render as little to a master as that master can be prevailed on to accept. We need not touch the question as to whether these warriors were justified in running such a risk, whether it were unlawful, or not, to make the attempt to which they were prompted by the expressed wish of David. It may have been unlawful; there must have been a point at which obedience to God would have forbidden obedience to their king; but we have no means for accurately judging whether this point had been reached in the case now before us. We may, therefore, waive all reference to the right or the wrong, of the resolve to cut a path to the waters of Bethlehem; we have simply to do with the power which a mere wish of David had over his servants, for we may hence derive a lesson for all servants, whether of God or of man.

You are to observe that David issued no command. He might have summoned the bravest of his battalions, and bidden them attempt the forcing a passage to the well; but nothing of the kind was done: he simply uttered a wish, without, perhaps, thinking that he should be overheard, and certainly without designing that it should be interpreted as a command. But the wish was sufficient for bold and true-hearted men, and they instantly faced death to attempt its gratification. And we say of these servants, thus yielding as ready an obedience to an overheard wish as could have been rendered to the most positive order, that they rebuke many of ourselves, who, whether it be their Creator, or their fellow-creatures, by whom they are employed, seem only anxious to reduce their service to the smallest possible amount. There is an example set by these warriors to every man who is called on for obedience, which fits the history before us to be inscribed on our kitchens, our shops, and our churches. The example lies in their not having waited for a command, but acted on a wish; and there is no man to whom the term servant applies—and it applies to every man, at least with reference to God—who would not do well to ponder the example, and consider whether he be not yet far below such a model.

If you take the case of servants, as the term is commonly applied, is not

their service, for the most part, a sort of labor to do no more than they can help, an endeavor to earn their wages with as little outlay of toil as their employers will consent to remunerate? Servants, even servants "professing godliness," seem to have practically but little remembrance of the precept of St. Paul, "not with eye-service as men-pleasers." It is almost all "eye-service," and flags in proportion as inspection is withdrawn. It is a rare thing to find a servant who will diligently obey your commands; but where shall we look for one who will carefully consult your wishes? And we do not know that a more annoying argument is to be found against the advantageousness of a diffused christian education, than is apparently furnished by a fact which it is not easy to gainsay, that, in place of an improved race of servants having resulted from an improved system of general instruction, we have less diligent, less obliging, and less trustworthy domestics. We are sure as to the unsoundness of the argument, because we are sure, on unassailable principles, that the knowledge of God in Christ will make men, from the prince to the peasant, fitter for whatsoever duties appertain to their station. But, nevertheless, when the appeal is to results, to the testimony of experience, not of theory, it does involve the advocate of national education in no ordinary difficulty, that the opponent can enter our households and ask, with much semblance of truth, what, comparatively, has become of those attached, steadfast, and conscientious servants, who had no interest separate from their master's, and no wish but that of executing his? And servants, who have enjoyed all the superior advantages of modern days, and yet are palpably inferior to the servants of former—restless, rude, dishonest—little know how much they may contribute towards such disgust amongst the rich at the instruction of the poor, as will prompt an endeavor to re-establish the ignorance which consisted with something praiseworthy, as preferable to the knowledge which threatens to issue in confusion.

Neither is it only to servants, in the common sense of the word, that the example before us applies. The same

holds good generally of the employed, whatever the nature of the employment. It ought to be the ruling principle with him who serves another in any capacity, to serve him upon principle, to identify himself with his employer, and to have the same eye to his interests as though they were his own. If a man buy my time, and I do not devote to him that time, there is robbery as actual as though he had bought my merchandize and I then sold it to another. If he pay me for my labor, and I in any measure withhold it, then, up to that measure, there is as palpable fraud as if he bargained for my goods and I used a false balance. The indolent clerk, the idle shopman, the careless agent—I see no moral difference between these and the grossly dishonest who tamper with the property of their employers. And if a general rule be required for the guidance of those who are in any kind of service, we fetch it from the example of David's three captains, with whom a wish had all the force of a command. It is not that this rule will furnish specific direction in each specific case; but that he, who acts up to it, will be keeping in exercise the motives and dispositions which will ensure the right course under all possible circumstances. He who consults wishes as well as commands, or with whom a known wish is as binding as an express command, will necessarily feel at all times under the eye of his employer; or, rather, will know no difference when that eye is upon him and when turned away. His whole aim will be to act for the employer as the employer would act for himself; and it is evident that nothing can be added to such a description, if you wish to include singleness of purpose, sincerity, diligence, and faithfulness.

And you have only to contrast, in your own minds, the servant who will do nothing but what is positively, and, in so many words, commanded, and another who watches the very looks of his master, that he may read his wishes and take them for laws, to assure yourselves that the feature of good service which we derive from the conduct of the captains of David rather gives the whole character than a solitary mark. Yea, consider men in general as the servants of God—of God



who expressly says, "I will guide thee with mine eye," as though a look were to suffice; and this feature will distinguish the true and the earnest from the hypocritical and the lukewarm. Let us ask ourselves whether, unhappily, it be not the too common disposition of those who make profession of godliness, to pare down as much as possible the service required at their hands, to calculate how small a sacrifice, and how slight an endurance, will consist with their being reckoned amongst the members of Christ? In place of a generous zeal to give up every thing for God, and such a fear of offending him as would make them avoid what is indifferent lest they indulge in what is wrong, men are apt to compute how far they may venture in compliance with the world, how near they may go to the forbidden thing, and yet not lose the distinctive character of the people of Christ. It should not content the Christian that such or such an indulgence is not prohibited by the letter of the law; he should search whether it be not prohibited by the spirit. In cases where there really may be a doubt as to the lawfulness, he should determine for the course which is the most likely to be right; and, if the scales hang even, for that to which he has the less inclination. This would be true Christian obedience, an obedience of which love is the law. God dealeth with us as with children rather than servants—not laying down an express precept for every possible case, but supposing in us a principle which will always lead to our considering what will be pleasing to himself, and to our taking his pleasure as our rule. And just as the affectionate child will watch the countenance of the parent, obeying what he reads there as well as what he hears from the lip, so should the Christian search for the least indication of God's will and give it all the force of a positive statute.

But can we say that we do this? Can we deny, that, for the most part, we rather compute how little God will take than how much we can give; what may be withheld, than what surrendered? That a thing is doubtful, does not make us shun it as though it were wrong: we are more disposed, under the plea of its being dubious, to

adopt it as right. It is not sufficient for us, that God is likely to be better pleased if we abstain than if we indulge: we urge the want of express command, and are secretly gratified that it does not exist. Alas, then, how are we reproved by the warriors of David! What Christians should we be, if, with them, a wish were law enough to arm us against danger and death! Go in thought to the field of battle, where Israel is ranged against the Philistine, when you may feel inclined to evade a painful duty under the plea of its not being distinctly enjoined. When you would excuse yourselves from making a sacrifice, foregoing an indulgence, or attempting a difficulty, by urging, that though it might be acceptable to God, at least he has not made it indispensable, observe what the servants of an earthly king could do in the absence of command, and let the servants of a heavenly blush to do less. Who are these that rush upon the enemy, as though they knew nothing of danger and bore a charm against death? We see three warriors press along the plain; their whole demeanor is that of those charged with some fearful commission; the fate of a kingdom has surely been given into their keeping; they are urging forwards with the desperateness of men bidden, on some authority which they dare not resist, to attempt an enterprise involving the safety of thousands. Not so: these warriors might have remained inactive and yet been guilty of no positive disobedience to their leader. They have received no directions obliging them to draw the sword and hew a passage. They were just in the position in which you yourselves often are, with no command from a master, but with some intimation of a wish. And they are but setting an example to the warriors of Christ—an example as to the taking every indication of the wish, as an expression of the will of our Lord, seeing that they are cutting their way through the hosts of the Philistine, not because they have heard David exclaim, "Unsheath the sword, and dare the foe;" but only because they have heard him say, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem."

But let us now pass from the con-

duct of the servants to that of David, in which there is matter, as it would seem, for blame as well as praise. You may be sure, that, if we have spoken with something like severity of servants, it has not been in forgetfulness of how much, after all, the goodness of the servant depends upon the master. We never hear an instance of a domestic growing old in one family, without feeling that it tells well for both sides; if a good master will not keep a bad servant long, neither will a bad master long keep a good. It must, in truth, be through a mutual system of forbearance and accommodation, that any thing like harmony is maintained in the several relations of life: to expect always to prescribe, and never to concede, shows an ignorance of human character and condition, which is sure to be visited with opposition and thwarting. They who look to be obeyed cheerfully, must take heed that they command judiciously; the greater the known readiness to comply with their wishes, the greater should be the caution that those wishes be always reasonable and just.

And herein was David much in fault; for, knowing the devotedness of his followers, their attachment to his person, and their uncalculating bravery in his cause, he should have been all the more careful to give utterance to neither a command nor a wish which he had not well weighed, or with which he did not desire a literal compliance. It was not fitting in a man, who had learnt, by experience, that the warm hearts about him would obey his very look, to express a rash longing—and such, at least, was that for water from Bethlehem. We have no reason to suppose that there was no water in the camp, or that none could have been procured from more accessible springs. Perhaps the well of Bethlehem was celebrated for its water; or perhaps David, as having been born and brought up in Bethlehem, had a special affection for the fountain of which he had drunk in his youth. This longing for the well of Bethlehem in an hour of danger and strife, may have been one of those instances of the travelling back of the mind to the days and scenes of boyhood, which are so common and so touching amid

the woes and struggles of more advanced life; the fields where we once played seeming to mock us by their greenness, and the well-remembered waters and trees sparkling and waving before the eye, as though to reproach our having abandoned what was so peaceful and pure for the whirl and din of the world. It may have been thus with David: his circumstances were now harassing and perplexed, and, as he felt his difficulties and perils, the imagery of his youth may have come thronging before him—himself a shepherd-boy, and his flock grazing on the bank of a quiet glassy stream; and it may have been but an expression of something like regret that days were so changed, when he exclaimed, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate."

But, whatever were the uppermost feeling in the mind of David, we may fall back upon our assertion, that, circumstanced as he was, it ought not to have been expressed. Indeed, even had he not had such reason to know that those around him were on the watch for the intimation of his wishes, he would not have been warranted in giving words to a desire, that others would risk life just to gratify himself. There is all the difference between the feeling and the expressing a desire; we are not necessarily answerable for the former—we must be for the latter: even as an evil thought may be darted into the mind, we cannot tell whence, and we be innocent notwithstanding; but the thought cannot be embodied in speech and we not be guilty. If David's wish were harmless, as breathed only to himself, it was not so as declared to his servants: he must have known its gratification impossible, except at the risk of many lives. Not that we suppose that David entertained any thought of his wish being acted upon; in all likelihood it never crossed his mind that the desperate sally would be made. But it is precisely in this that he was to blame; it ought to have crossed his mind: he would not issue a command which he did not mean to be obeyed; neither, circumstanced and surrounded as he was, should he have hinted a wish, if he did not design the gratification to be attempted.



And it is here that we may obtain some general rules which all who have authority would do well to adopt. You see that, in proportion as you are faithfully and affectionately served, you are bound to be careful how you issue a command or breathe a desire. Take it as the perfection of a servant, to be anxious only to know, that he may do, his master's will; and it is the perfection of a master, to manifest no will but what his servant may be able, and with good conscience, to perform. There can be no tyranny greater, and none more ungenerous, than that which, taking advantage of the condition or attachment of a domestic, imposes duties which are too severe, or tasks which are unlawful. I may feel that a servant is either so dependent upon me, or so devoted to my wishes, that he will tell a lie at my bidding, and assure the visiter that I am from home when he knows me in the house. But what is to be said of my baseness, my cruelty, in prescribing to a fellow-creature over whom I have some kind of power, that he should do what he cannot do, and not offend the God of truth! I may not actually mean him to tell a lie; I may suppose that there is a sort of conventional understanding in society which causes a certain sense to be put on the phrase which I dictate: but it is too much to expect that the fine-drawn distinction should be perceived by the servant; his feeling must be that he has told a direct falsehood for my sake; and it is hardly reasonable to require that he should not, at other times, tell one for his own.

And this is but a particular case, which may be taken to illustrate the general rule. The general rule is, that, in every command, in every wish, there be due consideration for the ability, the comfort, and the conscience of the domestic. No longing for the water of Bethlehem, if it cannot be had but by strength unduly tasked, time so engrossed that none remains for prayer, or principle so disregarded that man's law supersedes God's.

Neither is this all which should be gathered or inferred from the circumstances under review. You see how easily what was never meant as a command may be received as such,

where there is affectionate watchfulness amongst friends and attendants. Then what care should there be, that nothing be said in joke which may be taken in earnest, nothing even hinted at as our belief or desire, which we would not have acted on by those who hear the words. It is specially to children that this remark applies; for they may be supposed to have all that submissiveness to authority, and that willingness to oblige, which distinguished David's warriors, as well as that inability of discriminating a casual expression from an actual direction, which seems equally to have belonged to the men, who felt themselves bidden to attempt the passage to Bethlehem. The child, from his age, can know little of any figures of speech, and will commonly adopt the literal interpretation; thus, what was never meant to be seriously understood may exert all the force of precept or instruction. In this way may indiscreet conversation, to which they who carry it on attach no importance, and which they never dream of any one's taking as expressing their actual thoughts and feelings, be received by young minds with all the reverence which they are taught to render unto truth. Disciplined to respect their superiors, and, therefore, to attach credit to their words—instructed to obey them implicitly, and, therefore, to consult their very wishes, it can hardly fail but that what is uttered, in their presence will pass for true, and what is desired appear worth being sought. And probably children often imbibe opinions, which form the foundation of character, from casual expressions dropped in their hearing, and which, had explanation been asked, they would have found to have been spoken without thought and almost without meaning. Who shall tell us the effect of a joke upon sacred things, the levity of which may have been pardoned by elder persons for the sake of the wit, but the irreverence of which may sink deep into younger, and work a half persuasion that the Bible, after all, is not that awful volume with which it were sacrilege to trifle? Who shall tell us what is done by discourse on the advantageousness of wealth, and by hasty wishes, perhaps thoughtlessly uttered, for larger measure of



earthly possessions? The seeds of covetousness may have been sown in the young hearer, when the speaker himself has been indifferent to money; and the child of a parent who is actually content with a little, may grow up with a passion for much, from having overheard the parent talk as though he desired a far ampler fortune.

You may tell us that we assign causes disproportionate to effects: as well tell us that the oak cannot spring from the acorn. Life is made up of little things; and human character, traced to its beginning, will be found issuing from drops rather than from fountains. You ought, therefore, when speaking before those whom you instruct to respect and obey you, to speak on the supposition that all which you assert will be received as true, all for which you wish be accounted desirable. You must not think aloud, if you do not mean your thoughts to pass for verities or have the weight of commands. If such a rule be neglected, you must not be surprised if they who hear you enter upon the paths which you never meant them to tread, and afterwards plead your authority in excuse. There may again occur precisely what occurred with David and his servants. It is not that the monarch has commanded his warriors to dare death, that they may fetch him water from a favorite spring. It is not that he has even wished them to undertake the rash and perilous enterprise. It is only that, without reflection or thought, he gave utterance to something that was passing in his mind, and that those about him overheard the inconsiderate expression. And do you mark that young person, who is devoting himself with uncalculating eagerness to some worldly pursuit, as though he had been trained to nothing but the acquisition of honor or wealth? Is it that the parent literally instructed him to rush through all danger that he might but grasp the coveted thing? Is it that he was told, in so many words, to give energy, and talent, and time, to the obtaining a perishable good, so that he can urge the precept of a father, whom he loved and revered, as justifying a career in which the object is worthless, if com-

pared with the risk and the toil? Probably not so. The parent never wished him thus to squander his powers; the parent never thought that he would; but that parent, having gained his affections and secured his attention to his commands and his wishes, was little careful as to what he let fall in his hearing; he was apt to say what he did not mean, to give words to feelings which he would never have breathed, had he remembered the possibility of their being received as genuine, or interpreted as laudable; in short, like David, when nothing was further from his wish than that his wish should be acted on, he was used to utter exclamations such as this, "O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate."

But this only sets before you what appears blame-worthy in the conduct of David: we have yet to consider what there may be to deserve praise or imitation. And this is to be sought in what he did when his followers returned, and placed before him the water for which he had inconsiderately longed. It would not have been strange, or unnatural, had he argued that, though he had done wrong in expressing the wish, it could not be unlawful to use the means of gratifying that wish so unexpectedly provided. He might have said, I would not indeed have exposed the lives of my brave soldiers, in order to obtain this refreshment; but now that, unbidden, and from the warmth of their attachment, they have cut their way to the well, and brought me of its flowings, I may surely quench my thirst, and thus afford them the best reward for their zeal in my service.

But David argued differently, in a manner that showed more of high principle, and strong fear of God. He felt that there was a contradiction, in owning an action wrong, and allowing himself to be advantaged by that action. The least which he could do, in proof of his consciousness of error, was to refuse to appropriate what that error had procured. He must punish himself, by an act of self-denial, for a want of self-command, and show that, if he had been betrayed into expressing a rash wish, he had at least discovered, and repented of, the rashness. And

therefore he would not taste the coveted draught, but made it a kind of offering to the Lord, pouring it on the ground, in witness that he had sinned, and that, having sinned, he needed an expiatory ablation.

It is not the heroism of David, in acting thus, which we propose for admiration and imitation, though it may be, as we stated in an earlier part of our discourse, that the monarch, parched with thirst, and yet refusing to touch the water which sparkled so invitingly before him, would form as fine a picture as human story can give of forbearance and greatness. But it is the genuineness of the repentance of David on which we would insist, the sincerity of his piety as proved by his refusal to derive benefit from his sin. We think that herein is he specially an example to ourselves, and that the cases are far from uncommon, in which there is such similarity of circumstance, as to render the example most direct and appropriate.

It is not for a moment to be questioned that a present advantage is often the immediate result of what is wrong, so that, in one way or another, the sin produces what the sinner desires to obtain. If it were not so, if the consequences of doing wrong were never, nay, if they were not frequently, profitable to the individual who does the wrong thing, we hardly know where, in most instances, temptation would lie, or where would be the exercise of virtue. In general, it is a balance between the present and the future which we are required to strike: the great task to which we are summoned, is the not allowing ourselves to be overborne by immediate results, so as to keep more distant out of sight, but the calculating what will be for our profit on the whole, visible things and invisible being alike brought into account. And, of course, whilst such is our condition, or such the system of probation beneath which we live, a sort of temporary reward must often be attainable by the sinner: there must be something of advantage to be procured through want of principle, and lost through rigid conscientiousness. Such cases will often occur in the stir and jostle of a mercantile community, where vast interests become so involved, and

immense revenues so depend on the turn of a single speculation, that the least underhand dealing might at times fill a man's coffers, and almost a dishonest thought transform him from the poor to the wealthy.

And we are now concerned with the question, as to what is binding on a man, if, with the advantages, procured by a fault, lying at his disposal, the water from the well of Bethlehem sparkling before him, he become convinced of his fault, aware that he has done wrong, or not acted with the honor and integrity which he was bound to have maintained. Is he to drink of the water, to enjoy the advantages? Ah, it may be often a hard question: but we do not see how there can be any true penitence, where what has been wrongfully obtained is kept and used, as though it had been the produce of equitable dealing. If a man have grown rich by dishonesty, he ought, we believe, to become poor through repentance. We cannot think it enough, if an individual, who has not made his money in the most clean-handed way, and who feels compunction in consequence, give large sums in charity, as an atonement, or reparation for his fault. If he only give what he can conveniently spare, or even if his charities somewhat press on his resources, he certainly does nothing but what, on high christian principle, he would be bound equally to do, had his property accumulated in the most honorable modes. And it cannot be sufficient to make that use of money unjustly acquired, which a man of strong piety would make of the produce of integrity and industry, and thus, over and above the concealment of having been dishonest, to acquire the reputation of being benevolent.

We should, therefore, be disposed to give the conduct of David as furnishing an example for those, who, conscious of a fault, are so situated as to be able to reap advantage from that fault. Let the case be that at which we have just hinted, as not unlikely to occur amid the complicated interests of a great mercantile community. Let us suppose an opportunity, presented to a trader, of making large profits, if he will but deviate, in some trifling particular, from what is strictly and un-

doubtedly upright. The fault to be committed may hardly be greater than that committed by David, who did nothing but thoughtlessly give utterance to a wish which ought not to have been entertained, or at least not expressed. It may just depend on the keeping back of some piece of information which the trader is not compelled to divulge, and which others, if equally on the alert, and equally shrewd, might perhaps have equally obtained, whether a certain article shall fetch a certain price, or be suddenly and greatly depreciated. The trader does nothing but hold his tongue, as David did nothing but give it too much license, and a large profit in consequence lies at his disposal. But now a feeling is wrought in the trader's mind, that it was not the act of a conscientious and high principled man, to take advantage of the ignorance of others, and thus entangle them in a bargain which they would not have made, with his reasons for expecting the sudden fall in the market. And as he debates what ought to be done with property so dubiously acquired, his first resolution will probably be to use it well and religiously: at least, he will say, it increases my power of benefiting others, and promoting religious objects; and I may lawfully retain it, intending that it shall be thus employed. But this is, to the very letter, what David would have done, had he resolved to drink the water, arguing that it would refresh and invigorate him, and thus enable him to fight with greater strength the battle of the Lord. But God will have no offering on which there is a stain. Money, soiled by the mode of acquisition, is hardly to be sanctified by the mode of employment. When Zaccheus stood before Christ, and described what he did with his property, he spake of giving half his goods to the poor; but, mark, he did not reckon amongst those goods what he might have acquired through underhand dealing—such portion, if such there were, was not his to retain or distribute at pleasure: "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." There was an accurate distinction made by this publican, now that he had been brought to a correct state of mind, between restitution and alms-

giving: he would give alms of that only which had been honorably obtained; the rest he returned, with large interest, to those from whom it had been unfairly procured.

And though it might be impossible for the trader, in the case just supposed, to make restitution precisely to the parties who have been injured through his successful speculations, we do not see how, with his conscience accusing him of having done wrong, he can lawfully appropriate any share of the profits, any more than David might have lawfully drunk of the water procured at his ill-advised wish. It may not be possible to make restitution; for so interwoven are various interests, and so many are the contrivances for shifting off losses from ourselves, and making them fall upon others, that it is often hard to say where the pressure really rests; and it is among the most melancholy of facts, that the rich speculator who seems only to sweep up the gains of men of large means like himself, would often be found, if you could trace the effects of his speculations through their multifold spreadings, to have compassed unwittingly the ruin of a hundred petty dealers, and wrung away the scanty pittance of orphans and widows. But if there may not be restitution, because the exact objects injured are not to be ascertained, we do not, nevertheless, understand why there should be appropriation. The king of Israel held the helmet in his hands, and looked upon the water as it sparkled in that war-cup. Was he tempted by the freshness and clearness of the coveted draught, now that he felt how wrong he had been in breathing the wish? Oh, no! it looked to him like blood: it came not from the well of Bethlehem, but from the veins of his soldiers: shall he drink, so to speak, of the very life of another? he shrinks from the thought and will do nothing with the water but pour it out to God.

And the trader stands, with the profits of his scarcely honorable speculation glittering before him. Shall he invest them for his own use? shall he take possession of them for himself and his family? Oh, they may have been coined out of the losses, the distresses, the sufferings of numerous households; they may as well seem to



him dimmed with tears, as the water seemed to David polluted with blood; and we would have him, if his repentance be sincere, and he desire to prove that sincerity, imitate the monarch in refusing to appropriate the least portion, in pouring out the whole as an offering to the Lord; and in exclaiming, when tempted to profit by the sin for which he professes to be sorry, "Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this."

Now we have thus endeavored to give a practical character to a narrative of Scripture, which it is easy to read without supposing it to convey any personal lessons. Probably some of you, on the announcement of our subject, expected us to treat it as a typical history: for the mention of the well of Bethlehem, and the longing for its water, might immediately suggest that Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judah, and that he offers to each of us, what, in his own words, "shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." But it may be doubtful whether we have, in this instance, sufficient authority for regarding the registered occurrences as symbolical; at all events, we should never spiritualize any narrative of facts, till the facts have been carefully examined as facts, and the lessons extracted which their record may have been designed to convey.

But whilst we should hesitate to found any doctrinal statement on the narrative before us, considered as typical, we know not why, having strictly confined ourselves to the plainest and most practical view of the passage, we may not now, in conclusion, survey the occurrences with an eye that looks for Christ and the Gospel, in the persons and events of earlier dispensations. There may be truth in the supposition, which some have advanced, that David had only a spiritual meaning in the wish to which he gave utterance. It is possible; and, if so, the whole transaction may have had that significant character which belongs to much of the history of early days, and which turned occurrences into parables, through which God instructed his faithful servants. David, partially informed as to the scheme of redemption, and knowing that he himself was, in many points,

set to prefigure the Messiah, must often have longed for fuller disclosures, and striven to give shape and consistency to dim, mysterious images, which passed to and fro in his visions as a prophet. He would associate Bethlehem, his own birth-place, with the birth-place of the Deliverer of whom he was a type; and look naturally on the trees and waters of that village, as obtaining a holy, a symbolical character from the illustrious Being who would arise there in "the fulness of time." It might then have been a wish for greater knowledge of redemption, which was uppermost in the monarch's mind, when he longed for water from the well of Bethlehem. How natural, that, harassed as he was with temporal troubles, he should desire spiritual consolations, and that he should pray for the refreshments which were eventually to gush forth, as he well knew, from Bethlehem.

And may there not have been conveyed to him, through what then took place, intimations in regard of the deliverance of the world? Certainly, it were not difficult to give a parabolic character to the occurrences, and to imagine them ordered with a view to David's instruction. If water is to be fetched from the well of Bethlehem, it must be with the discomfiture of a vast host of foes: three unite in the purpose, and overbear all opponents. And if "living water" is to be brought to those who lie parched on the moral desert of the earth, indeed it can only be with the defeat of mightier than the Philistines: principality and power withstand the endeavor: who shall prevail in so great an enterprise? Three must combine: it is not a work for any one person, even though divine; but three shall unite, to strike down the adversaries, and bring the draught of life to the perishing: and if the cup come apparently in the hand of but one of the three, the other two shall have been equally instrumental in procuring the blessing.

Thus far there is so much analogy as would seem to make it not improbable, that the transaction was designed to be significant or symbolical. But does the analogy end here? We would not carry it too far; and yet we can believe that a still deeper lesson

was opened up to David. Did he long for water from the well of Bethlehem? did he think that it was only water, something merely to refresh the parched lip of the pilgrim, which was to flow from the Surety of a world that iniquity had ruined? It may have been so: it may have been that he was yet but imperfectly taught in the mysterious truths of propitiation and redemption. What then? he receives what he had longed for, what had been drawn from the well of Bethlehem; but it seems to him not water, it seems to him blood, the blood of one of those who had braved so much for his refreshment. May he not have learned something from this as to the nature of the interposition which the Redeemer would make? May he not have gathered that the fountain to be opened, for the cleansing and refreshing of the world, would be a fountain of blood?

"My blood is drink indeed"—these words, uttered years after by the Redeemer himself, may have been virtually syllabled to the Psalmist, through his being forced to regard as blood the water from the well of Bethlehem, that well to which he looked as typifying, in some way, the person or of-

fice of Christ. And then there is a high solemnity in his pouring out the water unto the Lord. It was the blood of the costliest sacrifice, and must all be presented as an expiatory offering.

We know not whether David were thus instructed or not; whether the transaction were designed to be significative, nor whether, if it were, the symbols were explained. But certainly the occurrences are such as might be woven into a kind of parable of redemption; and it is always pleasing to find figures and shadows which correspond to Christian truths, even where we have no express warrant for asserting the resemblance. Blessed be God, we need not long in vain for water from the well of Bethlehem. The host of the mighty have been broken through; a stronger than the strong has unlocked for us the flowings of the river of life: but oh, if we would take of the stream, and live for ever, we must acknowledge it as the blood of Him who went on our behalf against "principalities and powers," and who finding the springs of human happiness dried, filled them from his own veins, and they gushed with immortality.

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## SERMON VIII.

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### THE THIRST OF CHRIST.

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"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."—John, 19: 28.

If an impostor were to arise, desirous of passing himself off as some personage whom prophets had foretold, he would naturally take the recorded predictions, and endeavor to make the facts of his history agree with their

announcements. It would evidently be useless for him to pretend to the being the predicted individual, unless he could point out at least an apparent correspondence between what he was, and what he did, and the character and

conduct which prophecy had delineated. There would, of course, be an immediate reference to the ancient writings, an immediate comparison of their foretellings with what was now given as their accomplishment; and if the two did not agree, the pretender would be instantly scouted, and no one could for a moment be deceived by his pretensions.

Hence the great endeavor of the supposed impostor would certainly be to extract from prophecy a full account of the actions and fortunes of the individual for whom he wished to be taken, and then, as nearly as possible, to make those actions and fortunes his own. Suppose, for example, that an impostor had desired to pass himself off as the Messiah, the deliverer and ruler, so long and anxiously expected by the Jews. He would necessarily have been aware that the national expectation rested on certain ancient prophecies, and that all which could be known beforehand of the Christ was contained in certain books received as inspired. It is not, therefore, to be imagined that he would fail to be a student of prophecy, or to take its descriptions as sketches in which he must exhibit delineations of himself. But, supposing him to have done this, could he have made much way in establishing a correspondence between himself and the subject of prophecy? It is easy, undoubtedly, to find, or fancy, predictions of which a man might contrive an apparent fulfilment in respect of himself. They might be predictions of certain things that should be done, and these, or very similar, the man might be able to perform. They might be predictions of certain things that should be suffered; and these, or very similar, the man might endure. But could the individual, whom we have supposed setting up for the Messiah, have managed to effect a conformity between his actions and sufferings, and those predicted of our Lord? It is allowed on all hands, that the history of Christ, as related in the Gospels, corresponds, with great accuracy, to what prophets had foretold of the Messiah. But is the correspondence such as an ingenious impostor, having the prophecies in his hands, and studying to produce their apparent accomplishment, could have

possibly effected? This is a question well worth the being asked, though the answer is so easy that you may all give it for yourselves.

There are a few respects in which an impostor might have contrived the fulfilment of prophecy. But most of the predictions referring to Christ are of things over which the individual could have no control: predictions, for example, as to the place and circumstances of his birth, as to the treatment which he should meet with, and the death which he should die. They are predictions which were not to be fulfilled by the actions of the party himself, but by the actions of others; and we need not say how little power the individual could have of making others so act as seemingly to accomplish prophecy, however bent he might be on the apparently fulfilling it himself. And it ought to be further observed, that if an impostor had endeavored, in the time of our Lord, to pass himself off as the predicted Messiah, and, accordingly, had attempted to effect a correspondence between his own history and prophecy, he would never have made himself "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He would have taken the national expectation as the just interpretation of prophecy, and never have thought of making good his pretensions by affecting a resemblance between himself and delineations which those around him either denied or disliked. His pattern would unquestionably have been the Messiah, not as described by seers of old, but rather as described in the popular explanations of their visions: and we need not tell you that such a Messiah was not presented in the person of our Lord and Master Christ.

Thus there is nothing easier than the showing that the correspondence which may be traced between Jesus of Nazareth, and a mysterious personage of whom ancient prophecy makes frequent mention, is such as could not have been produced by any impostor, however artful or powerful. Even had prophecy been far clearer and more explicit than it was; had it not required, in many particulars which now seem quite plain, the being accomplished in order to the being thoroughly understood; we may fearlessly declare that no pretender,



taking it as his guide, and laboring to make his life its illustration, could have succeeded in effecting, even in appearance, the thousandth part of those numerous, striking, and frequently minute fulfilments which are to be traced in the actions and endurances of Him whom we honor as the King of Israel, the Anointed of God.

But why have we gone into these remarks on a point which, perhaps, may never have occurred to any of our hearers? for, probably, none of you ever entertained a suspicion that Christ might have contrived those fulfilments of prophecy on which so much stress is laid. Our reason is easily given. We have in our text the record of a thing done by Christ, with the view, or for the purpose, of accomplishing an ancient prediction. The course pursued is precisely that which, according to our foregoing statements, an impostor might have been expected to take. The party claiming to be the Messiah remembers a certain prophecy which has not yet been fulfilled, and forthwith sets himself to procure its fulfilment. It is, you see, expressly stated that Jesus said, "I thirst," in order that he might bring round the accomplishment of a passage of Scripture. And had this been the solitary instance in which prophecy found itself fulfilled in the history of Jesus, or had other fulfilments been of the same kind, such, that is, as might possibly have been contrived or planned, we admit that the argument from prophecy would have been of little worth in establishing the Messiahship of our Lord. But we have already sufficiently shown you that no such explanation can be given of the correspondences between history and prophecy in the case of the Redeemer; forasmuch as many of them were such as it was not in the power of any pretender to have produced, and many more would have been avoided, rather than attempted, by the shrewdest deceiver. And this having been determined, we may allow that Christ occasionally acted with the express design of fulfilling predictions which had reference to himself; that he shaped his conduct, and ordered his sayings, with a view to agreement with what prophets had foretold. We may admit this, without any misgiv-

ings that we perhaps weaken the argument from prophecy, seeing that, whilst what we admit is of very rare occurrence, it cannot bring suspicion upon evidence derived from the general character of predictions, and their accomplishment.

And it is worth your observing that, even in the case before us, though unquestionably Christ complained of thirst for the purpose of fulfilling a prophecy, it was not in man's power to ensure the fulfilment. His mere complaining of the thirst accomplished no prediction. The prediction, as we shall presently see, required that when the Messiah was thirsty there should be given him vinegar to drink. Had our Lord asked for vinegar, and had vinegar been brought him, there might have been some ground for saying that he actually made the accomplishment of a prophecy. But when he only complained of thirst, and when, in answer to his complaint, not merely was a sponge put to his mouth, but a sponge full of vinegar, you may see that there were circumstances, and contingencies, which could hardly have been provided for, except by divine foresight; so that, although indeed Christ made his complaint, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," there is little probability that the Scripture would have been fulfilled had he not been in truth the Son of the living God. You may say that Christ saw "the vessel full of vinegar," and that he might fairly have calculated that a complaint of thirst would be met by the offer of vinegar. But, at least, he could not have arranged that the vinegar should be the nearest drink at hand, even if it were at hand; for "one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar;" and thus, put the case how you will, the accomplishment of the prophecy hardly came within human contrivance. Or you may say, that, as vinegar was commonly used by the Roman soldiers, the almost certainty was that vinegar would be offered: but it appears that only one person was willing to attend to Christ's complaint, "the rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him." How far, then, was the accomplishment from having been necessarily in the power of a deceiver!

We may, however, consider that

enough has now been said on an objection which might be raised against a fulfilment of prophecy, because there was an evident acting with a view to that fulfilment. We would pass to more interesting statements, which may be grounded on the very simple, but affecting incident, which is recorded in our text. We hardly know whether, in the whole narrative of the Mediator's sufferings, there is a verse so full of material for profitable meditation. We shall not attempt to parcel out this material under any set divisions, but rather leave ourselves free to follow such trains of thought as may successively present themselves. We shall only assign it, as the general object of the remainder of our discourse, to examine the truths and inferences derivable from the facts, that, just before he expired, Christ exclaimed, "I thirst," and that he uttered the exclamation in order "that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

Now we think it well deserving your notice, that it should have been for the sake of accomplishing prophecy, and not for that of assuaging his pains, that our Lord, in his last moments, complained of thirst. It seems implied in the concise statement of the Evangelist, that, had he not remembered a prediction which was yet unfulfilled, Christ would have been silent, though he might have used of himself the touching words of the Psalmist, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." Intolerable must have been his thirst as he hung between heaven and earth; yet he would never, as it seems, have mentioned that thirst, nor asked a single drop of moisture, had he not thought it necessary to the complete proof of his mission. You know that this is the solitary exclamation which he uttered expressive of bodily suffering. He is not reported to have said any thing when the crown of thorns was fastened round his forehead. There is no recorded cry, or groan, when the nails were driven into his hands and feet, or when the cross was set upright, though the pain must have been acute, almost beyond thought. He endured all this, not only without a murmur, but without even a manifestation, or indication, of his agony; so that never was there the martyr who bore with greater for-

itude the torments of a lingering and execrating death.

His other sufferings, however, scarcely admitted of alleviation; there was nothing to be done but submit, and wait patiently for death. Though even in regard of these he seems to have declined the ordinary modes of mitigation, for he refused the "wine mingled with myrrh," which was tendered him just before his crucifixion, and which, by partially stupifying the victim, might have diminished the torture. He had a great work to perform on the cross, and he would not deaden his faculties ere he ascended that terrible altar.

But thirst might have been relieved—thirst, which must have been one of the most distressing consequences of crucifixion—and it would have been natural that he should have asked of the bystanders a few drops of water. And he did mention his thirst, but not for the sake of moistening the parched tongue and throat—only to afford occasion for another proof of his being the Messiah. It is as though he had no thought to give to his sufferings, but, even in the moment of terrible extremity, were intent upon nothing but the great work which he had undertaken for men. We may even venture to think that not only was it not for the sake of mitigating his sufferings that he complained of thirst; but that it was an increase of those sufferings to have to make the complaint. The multitude, which stood round, were disposed to treat him with derision; they were watching him, maliciously and scornfully, that they might triumph in his anguish. You may judge how eager they were to show contempt and hatred of the sufferer, from what we have already referred to, as having occurred on his utterance of the piteous cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The insulting shout immediately arose, "This man calleth for Elias"—so ready were they to make him the subject of ridicule, and so on the watch for proof that they had succeeded in driving the iron into his soul.

But hitherto he had, as it were, almost baffled and disappointed them: he had betrayed little or no emotion; but, by his apparent superiority to bodily torture, had denied them all occasion for fierce exultation. And it quite con-



sists with what we know of the innocent but sensitive sufferer, that we should suppose it a new trial to him to have to confess what he felt, and thus to expose himself to the revilings of his inveterate enemies. There had been hitherto such a majesty in his anguish, such an awful and dignified defiance of torture, as must almost have made the executioner crouch before the victim. And now must he, as it were, yield? Must he, by an acknowledgment of suffering, gratify a savage crowd, and pierce the few fond and faithful hearts which were to be found at the foot of the cross? His mother was within hearing; at her side was the disciple whom he loved; they were already wounded to the quick—shall he lacerate them yet more by speaking of his wretchedness?

But the Scripture must be fulfilled. There was yet a particular in which prophecy had to be accomplished; and every other feeling gave way to that of the necessity of completing the proof of his being the Messiah. It was the last, and one of the most touching, of the evidences of his love. It was only his love for us which made him speak of his thirst. He would not leave the smallest room for doubt that he was indeed the promised Redeemer: he loved us too well not to provide against every possible suspicion; and therefore, though he would never have complained for the sake of obtaining any assuagement of the pain; though he would have desired to avoid complaining, that he might not provoke fresh insult from the multitude; though he would have kept silence, if only that he might not add to the grief of the few who tenderly loved him; yet, rather than allow the least particle to be wanting in the evidence whereby we might know him as the Christ, he gave all but his last words to an expression of distress.

Oh, we know of nothing which more shows the ardency of the Savior's love for the church, than this confession of thirst just before he expired. We look on him with admiration, as he stands unmoved before Pilate, and returns no answer to the vehement accusations poured forth by his countrymen. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is

dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." We behold him scourged, and buffeted, and crowned with thorns, and nailed to the accursed tree—and we are amazed, yea, confounded, by his patience; for not the least cry is wrung from him in his anguish. Is it that he does not feel acutely? Is it that his humanity is not sensitive to pain? Ah, not so. He is, all the while, tortured by an excruciating thirst, which is at once the evidence and the accompaniment of rack-ing pangs. But he has to set an example of endurance; he is moreover occupied with thoughts and hopes of the world's deliverance; and, therefore, by a mighty effort, he keeps down the struggling sorrow, and restrains every token of agony.

This then is in love to us; his silence is in love to us. But it might have accorded best with the feelings of so lofty a Being, thus to baffle his adversaries, by refusing to let them see him writhe beneath their merciless inflictions—does he love us so well that he will even yield to those adversaries, and confess himself vanquished, if it might be for our good? Yea, even this he will do; for remembering, as he hangs upon the cross, a prediction which has yet to be fulfilled, he forgets all in his desire to provide for our conviction, and breaks into the cry, "I thirst," in order only that the Scripture might be accomplished.

But we have stated that the prediction, which our Lord had in mind, was not one of great prominence, not one perhaps whose fulfilment would appear to us of much moment. We may suppose it to have been to words in the sixty-ninth Psalm that Christ mentally referred: "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." There is no other express prophecy whose accomplishment he can be thought to have contemplated; and we may venture to say, that, if this had not been literally fulfilled in respect of our Lord, we should hardly have urged it as an objection against his pretensions. Accustomed to regard the Psalms as spoken primarily in the person of David, we do not expect, even when they are undoubtedly prophetic, to find every line verified in the history of that Messiah of whom David was the type. We ex-



perience no surprise, if, in a Psalm, the quotations from which in the New Testament prove that it speaks of the Christ, we meet with verses which we cannot distinctly show to be applicable to our Lord. Suppose then that Christ had died without complaining of thirst, and without receiving the vinegar—we should perhaps scarcely have said that there was a prediction which had never been accomplished. We should either have supposed that the verse in question belonged in some way to David, or we should have given it, as we easily might, a figurative sense, and then have sought its fulfilment in the indignities and cruelties of which Christ was the subject.

And this shows you what a very minute particular it was in the predictions of himself, which caused our Lord to break silence, and utter an expression of suffering. It was a particular which we should probably have overlooked, or of which, at least, we should never have reckoned the literal accomplishment indispensable to the completeness of the prophetic evidence for Christ. Yet, so anxious, so determined was the Redeemer to leave us no possible excuse for rejecting him as the anointed of God, that, not satisfied with having fulfilled all but this inconsiderable particular, and though to fulfil it must cost him, as we have shown you, a very painful effort, he would not breathe out his soul till he had tasted the vinegar. This was indeed a manifestation of his love: but there are other truths, besides that of the Savior's solicitude for our good, to be drawn from his determination that the least prophecy should not go unaccomplished.

You will observe that it is affirmed in the text, that Jesus knew that all things were now accomplished; and that, knowing this, he proceeded to speak of his thirst, with a view to the fulfilment of yet one more prediction. Of course there were many things which had not been accomplished, many whose accomplishment was still necessarily future, having respect to the burial, resurrection, ascension, and triumph of Christ. But Jesus knew that every thing was accomplished, which had to be accomplished before his actual death, except the receiving the vinegar. He knew that there remained

nothing but that the words, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," should be fulfilled in his person, and he might resign his soul into the hands of the Father, convinced that every prophecy which bore reference to the life or death of the Messiah, had received its completion, and would be a witness for him to all after ages. You must admit that the text represents Jesus as knowing that there was but one word of prophecy which had not yet been accomplished, and that, too, a prophecy of so inconsiderable a particular, that we should scarcely have detected the want, had our Lord died without bringing it to pass.

This is a most surprising testimony to the completion of prophecy: it is a bold challenge to the infidel who would dispute the claims of Him who hung upon the cross. By taking an apparently unimportant prediction, and dealing with it as the only prediction, whether in type or in word, which had not yet been fulfilled, Jesus may be said to have staked his Messiahship on every single prophecy—"Find one, a solitary one, which I have not accomplished, and I resign all pretension to the being God's Son." And when you come to think of the multitude of predictions which have respect to the life and death of the Messiah, and of the almost countless mystical rites which, equally with the visions of seers, shadowed the "One Mediator between God and man," you can hardly fail to be amazed at the assertion, that Jesus knew that "all things were now accomplished." Yet, believing him to have been divine, we know him to have been omniscient; and, therefore, we are emboldened so to state the argument from prophecy, as to be ready to give up all, if you can find a single flaw. The writings of "holy men of old" teem with notices of that Being whom God had promised to send in "the fulness of time." Some of these notices relate to important, others to apparently trivial particulars. The line of which he was to spring, the power by which he should be conceived, the place in which he should be born, the dangers which should threaten his childhood, the miracles which he should work in his manhood, the treatment which he should receive,

the malice of his enemies, the desertion of his friends, the price at which he should be sold, the dividing of his garments, the death which he should die—all these are stated with the precision and minuteness of history; as though prophets had been biographers, and, not content with general outlines, had been instructed to furnish records of daily actions and occurrences. And over and above predictions so comprehensive yet so abounding in detail, there are figurative rites which all had respect to the same illustrious person; a thousand types foreshow his office, a thousand emblems represent his deeds and his sufferings.

And we are not satisfied with saying, that, in every striking and prominent particular, a correspondence may be traced between the Christ whose history we have in the Gospels, and the Christ whom we find in the strains of prophets, and the institutions of the law. We do not ask you to admit that it must have been of Jesus of Nazareth that the Old Testament spake, and that the temple services were full, because there are certain main features of that person in the description of inspired writers, and the shadows of ceremonial observances. Our position is, that there is not a single line in prophecy, which can be shown to refer to the life and death of the Messiah, which was not accomplished in Jesus; not a single type in the law to which he was not an antitype. You are at liberty to take any prediction, you are at liberty to take any shadow; and we are ready to rest the cause of christianity on that prediction's having been fulfilled in Jesus, or on his having been the substance of that shadow. Neither is this the challenge of a rash and boastful theology. This is the criterion which the Founder of our religion himself may be said to have appointed, and that, too, at the very moment when he was finishing our redemption. And we know not how to convey to you our idea of the wonderfulness of the fact, that Christ could feel, after he had hung for hours upon the cross, that, if a few drops of vinegar were given him by a by-stander, every jot and tittle would be accomplished of all that had been foretold of the Messiah, up to the time of his death, from the

first prophecy to Adam to the last words of Malachi. But it is unquestionable, from our text, that such was his feeling: upon this feeling we may safely ground our challenge; rather, we may consider it as the challenge of the Redeemer himself to the unbelieving of every generation.

It seems to us as though the Savior, whilst suspended between earth and heaven, had summoned before him every prophet and seer whom God had raised up in successive ages of the world, and had required each, as he passed in review, to give in his claims on the predicted Messiah. No marvel that he almost forgot his intense sufferings whilst engaged in so sublime and momentous an inquiry, whilst communing with patriarchs and priests, and the long train of heralds who had seen his day afar off, and kept expectation alive amongst men. And Abraham recounts to him all the particulars of the sacrifice of his son: Jacob reminds him of the departure of the sceptre from Judah: Moses speaks of the resemblance which must be borne to himself: Aaron, in his sacerdotal vestments, crowds the scene with mystic figures. Then arise the later prophets. They speak of his virgin mother; of his divine parentage, and yet of his descent from David. Isaiah produces his numerous, and almost historic, delineations: Daniel reckons up his seventy weeks: Micah fixes the nativity to Bethlehem Ephratah: Zechariah weighs the thirty pieces of silver, and introduces her king to Jerusalem, "riding upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass:" Malachi revives Elias, and sends him as a messenger to "prepare the way of the Lord." And David, as though his harp had been fresh strung, pours forth again his touching melodies, repeating the piteous complaints which, mingled at times with notes of triumph, he had been instructed to utter in his typical character.

But one after another of these ancient worthies passes from before the Mediator, leaving him assured that there is not the line in his prophetic scroll which has not been accomplished. And that Mediator is just about to commend his soul into the hands of the Father, satisfied of there



being no defect in the evidence from prophecy, when one saying of the royal Psalmist strikes him as not yet literally verified, and he defers death a moment longer, that this too, though seemingly of little moment, may hold good of himself. Yes, champions of infidelity, disprove it if you can, and if you cannot, explain, if you can, on your own principles, how the almost countless lines of prophecy came to meet in one person, and that one Jesus whom you refuse to adore. Yes, followers of the Savior, search deeply into the fact, and after searching, fail, if you can, to triumph in the having as your leader one who fulfilled to the letter, in the short space of a life, whatsoever voices and visions from on high had assigned, through many centuries, to the seed of the woman. True it is, gloriously, incontestably true, that Jesus had only, just before he died, to exclaim, "I thirst," and to receive, in answer to his complaint, a few drops of vinegar on a sponge, and he could then breathe out his spirit, amid the confessions of patriarchs, and prophets, and priests, and kings, each testifying, with a voice of wonder and of worship, that "all things," without a solitary exception, that "all things were now accomplished."

But our text throws light on another doctrine, or fact which, if often presented to your attention, is of so great importance as to deserve the being frequently stated. We are now about to refer to the power which Christ had over his life, a power which caused his death to differ altogether from that of an ordinary man. We wish you to observe the surprising composedness which is indicated by the words on which we now discourse. They seem to represent Christ, according to our foregoing statement, as actually examining all the records of prophecy, that he might determine whether there yet remained any thing to be done before the soul could be dismissed from the body. They give us the idea of a being who, in full possession of every faculty, is engaged in investigating ancient documents, rather than of one who, exhausted by protracted sufferings, is on the point of dissolution. How wonderful that the recollection should be so clear! that the almost expiring man should be

able, amid the throes of death, to fix on a single, inconsiderable prediction, to decide that there was no other, out of an immense assemblage, which had yet to be accomplished, and to take measures for its being accomplished before he breathed his last! What collectedness, what superiority to suffering, yea, what command over death!

For it is evident—and this is the most remarkable thing—that Jesus determined that he would live until the prediction were fulfilled, and that he would die so soon as it were. The Evangelist tells us, "When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." He waited till the vinegar had been given him, till, that is, the only unaccomplished prophecy had been accomplished, and then immediately, as though it were quite optional with him at what moment he would die, "gave up the ghost." This is amazing; this is unlike death, though it was actually the separation of body and soul; for where is the necessity of nature? where the ebbing away of strength? where the gradual wearing out of the principle of life? Christ evidently died just when he chose to die, and only because he chose to die: he had the spirit in his own keeping, and could retain or dismiss it as he pleased. You find that Pilate and others wondered at finding him so soon dead; he died sooner than a crucified person could have been expected to die: and herein too he had reference to prophecy, for had he lingered the ordinary or natural period, his legs would have been broken, as were those of the malefactors executed with him, whereas there was a typical prediction, in the paschal lamb, that not a bone of him should be broken.

So that, with Christ, to die was strictly a voluntary act—"I lay down my life: no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again"—it was an act of which he could fix the precise moment, which he could hasten or delay at his own pleasure, which no pain, no disease, no decay could effect, but which was wrought, altogether and at once, by his will. Death was not with him



what it will be with one of us. We shall die through necessity, with no power over the soul, whether of retaining or dismissing; exhausted by sickness, or broken up by accident, unable to make the pulse beat one more or one less than shall be ordained by a Being who is immeasurably beyond our control. But what resemblance is there between this and the death of Jesus Christ on the cross? Though dying what would be ordinarily a lingering death,—dying, to use a common expression, by inches, and therefore certain to be, at the least, exhausted and spent—we find him, in the few moments preceding dissolution, with every power in full play, the mind all in action for the accomplishing his mission, and keeping, as it were, the vital principle under its orders, ready to be suspended so soon as prophecies were fulfilled.

Call ye this death? Yes, men and brethren, this was really death: he who hung upon the cross died as actually as any one of us will die; for death is the separation of the soul from the body; and the soul of Christ went into the separate state, whilst his body was consigned to the grave. But call ye this the death of a mere man? can ye account for the peculiarities of Christ's death, except by supposing him the Lord of life and glory? Martyrs, ye died bravely, and beautifully; but ye died not thus. Saints of God, ye went wondrously through the last struggle; but ye went not thus. Oh, it is a noble thing, that we can go to the scene of crucifixion, and there, in spite of all the ignominy and suffering, discover in the dying man the incarnate God. The Jew and the Greek may taunt us with the shame of the cross; we glory in that cross: at no moment of his course has the Deity shone more brightly through the humanity of the Mediator: not when his voice was heard in the grave, and the buried returned to the living, did he more conspicuously show divine power over death, than in the releasing, when he would, his own soul from the body. Come with us and gaze on this mysterious person dying, "the just for the unjust." Seems he to you to be dying as an ordinary man? Can ye find no difference between him and those crucified, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left? Nay,

in them you have all the evidence that life is being drained out drop by drop, and that they are sinking beneath a process of painful exhaustion. But in him there are no tokens of the being overmastered, enfeebled, or worn down. In that mangled and bleeding body, there seems, to all appearance, as much animation as though there had not been going on, for hours, an assault on the citadel of life. Let us watch his last moments, let us observe his last act. But those moments are over, whilst we thought them yet distant; he has suddenly expired, though an instant ago there was no sign of death. How is this? how, but that he has indeed proved the truth of his assertion, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself!" an assertion which could be true of no one who had not an actual lordship over life, who was not, in fact, his own source of life, who was not in fact the Author of life. He has retained his spirit whilst he chose; he has dismissed that spirit when he would; and thus, though in the form of a creature, he has exercised the prerogative of the Creator.

The cross, then, with all its shame, the act of dissolution, with all its fearfulness, bears as strong attestation to the essential Deity of Christ, as the most amazing miracle performed, or the fullest prophecy accomplished. And we bow before a Being, as more than human, as nothing less than divine, who died by his own act, though nailed to a cross; by an effort of his own will, though beneath the hands of fierce executioners: we hail him, even in the midst of ignominy, as "the image of the invisible God," seeing that he could forbid the departure of the soul whilst there remained a prediction unfulfilled, and command it into paradise the moment that he saw that all things were accomplished.

Now they have not, we think, been either uninteresting or unimportant truths which we have thus derived from the fact that Christ complained of thirst on the cross, on purpose "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." But we have yet to fix your thoughts more particularly on Christ as an example, exhorting you to observe how engrossed he was with the work of redemption, how intent, up to the last mo-

ment of life, on performing the will of the Father who sent him. You must not think that, because Jesus had such power over his own life as we have just now described—a power which made him inaccessible to death, except so far as he chose to give death permission—he did not suffer acutely as he hung upon the cross. It is true that crucifixion never could have killed him, and that he did not die of the torture and exhaustion thereby produced; but nevertheless it is, on this very account, true, that his sufferings must have vastly exceeded those of the malefactors crucified with him. So far as the natural effects of crucifixion were concerned, he was not necessarily nearer dying when he died than when first fastened to the tree. But what does this prove, except that, retaining from first to last all his sensibilities, he must, from first to last, have endured the same exquisite torments? whereas, had he been dying, just as the thieves on either side of him were, he would gradually have become faint through loss of blood and excess of pain, and thus have been less and less sensitive to the pangs of dissolution.

Thus, in keeping the vital principle in undiminished vigor up to the moment of the departure of the soul, Christ did but keep undiminished the inconceivable anguish of being nailed to the cross: crucifixion, as it were, was momentarily repeated, and the agony of each instant was the agony of the first. Yet even to this did the Mediator willingly submit: for had he allowed himself the relief of exhaustion, his faculties would have been numbed, and he had full need of these, that he might finish in death what he had been engaged on in life. What an example did he thus set us, that we decline every indulgence which might possibly incapacitate us for doing God's work, and submit cheerfully to every inconvenience which may attend its performance! Oh, never were the Redeemer's love, and zeal, and patience so conspicuous as throughout those dark hours when he hung upon the tree. He might have died at once; and we dare not say that even then our redemption would not have been complete. There would have been equally the shedding of precious blood, and equally perhaps

the expiatory offering, had he sent his soul into the separate state the instant that his body had been nailed to the cross. But he would tarry in tribulation, that he might survey his vast undertaking, gather up the fragments, anticipate every possible objection, and bequeath the material of conviction to all who were not obstinately bent on infidelity.

What hearts must ours be, that we can look so coldly on the sufferer—suffering "for us men and for our salvation!" His last thoughts, as his earliest had been, were on our deliverance, on our welfare. Even the words which he uttered, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," were as expressive of his mental as of his bodily feeling. Indeed he did thirst: "the zeal of thine house hath consumed me:" he was parched with longing for the glory of God and the safety of man. "I thirst:" I thirst to see of the travail of my soul: I thirst for the effects of my anguish, the discomfiture of Satan, the vindication of my Father, the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Shall our last end be, in any measure, like this? Would that it might! Would that, when we come to die, we may thirst with the thirst of the Redeemer's soul! "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." "My soul thirsteth for thee," is an exclamation of the Psalmist, when declaring the ardency of his longings after God. And our Savior endured thirst, that our thirst might be quenched. His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth—"my heart," saith he, "in the midst of my body, is even like melting wax"—that we, inhabitants naturally of "a dry and barren land," might have access to the river of life, which, clear as crystal, pours itself through the paradise of God.

Who does not thirst for these waters? Ah, brethren, there is nothing required but that every one of us should be able, with perfect truth, to declare, "I thirst," and the Scripture shall be fulfilled in that man's drawing water out of the wells of salvation. For the invitations of the Bible presuppose nothing but a sense of want, and a wish for relief. "Ho! every one that thirsteth"—there is the summons,

there the description. Oh, that we may now thirst with a thirst for pardon, a thirst for reconciliation, a thirst for holiness. Then, when we come to die, we shall thirst for the joys of immortality—for the pleasures which are at God's right hand: we shall thirst, even as Christ did, that the Scripture may

be fulfilled: and the Scripture shall be fulfilled: for, bowing the head and giving up the ghost, we shall be in his presence with whom is "the fountain of life;" and every promise that has cheered us here, shall be turned into performance to delight us for ever.

## SERMON IX.

### THE SECOND DELIVERY OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."—Luke, 11 : 1.

There were two occasions on which our blessed Savior delivered that form of prayer which is known by his name. The first was in the sermon on the Mount, about the time of Pentecost; the second was in answer to the request made him in the text, about the Feast of Tabernacles, many months afterwards. You are not to confound the two occasions, as though the Evangelists St. Matthew and St. Luke had but given different accounts of one and the same delivery. The occasions were wholly dissimilar, separated by a considerable interval of time: on the one, Christ gave the prayer of himself, with nothing to lead to it but his own wish to instruct; whereas, on the other, he was distinctly asked by one of his disciples, who probably did but speak in the name of the rest.

We cannot suppose that these disciples had forgotten the Lord's Prayer. Whether or not all now present had been present at the Sermon on the Mount, we may justly conclude that they were all well acquainted with the comprehensive form which Christ had delivered for the use of the Church. Why, then, did they ask for another

form of prayer? and what are we to learn from Christ's meeting the wish by simply repeating that before given? These are not mere curious questions; you will presently see that they involve points of great interest and importance. Without advancing any conjectures, let us look at the Lord's Prayer as given in the Sermon on the Mount, and as here again given in answer to the request of the disciples: the comparison may furnish some clue which will guide us in our search.

Now we have spoken of the prayer delivered on the two occasions, as though it had been altogether the same: this however is not strictly the case; there are certain variations in the versions which should not be overlooked. Some of these, indeed, are very slight, requiring only to be mentioned, not examined; such as that, in the one, the word "debts" is used, in the other, "sins;" St. Luke says, Give us day by day;" St. Matthew, "Give us this day, our daily bread." Such differences are evidently but differences in the mode of expression.

There is, however, one remarkable variation. On the second occasion of



delivering his prayer, our Lord altogether omitted the doxology with which he had concluded it on the first. He quite left out, that is, the words, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Now there can be little doubt, that, in constructing his form of prayer, Christ had respect to the religious usages of the Jews. It is said that a serious student of the Gospel, and one at the same time versed in Jewish antiquities, may trace, at every step, a designed conformity to the rules and practices of devotion which were at that time observed. Without attempting generally to prove this, it will be worth our while to consider what was the Jewish custom as to the conclusion of their prayers, whether public or private.

We find,\* that in the solemn services of the Temple, when the priests had concluded a prayer, the people were wont to make this response; "Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and ever." Public prayer—prayer, that is, in the Temple, finished with a doxology very similar to that which concludes the Lord's Prayer. But this doxology was never used in more private prayer, prayer in a synagogue, or in a house. Observe, then: our Lord gives his prayer on the first occasion with the doxology, on the second, without it: what may we infer from this? Surely, that he wished his disciples to understand that the prayer was designed both for public use and for private.

In the Sermon on the Mount the prayer had concluded with the doxology; and the disciples, we may believe, had thence gathered that the prayer was intended to be used in the Temple. But they still wanted a form for private devotion, and on this account preferred the request which is contained in our text. Our Lord answers the request by giving them the same form, but with the omission of the doxology; thus teaching that his prayer was adapted to the closet as well as to the church. If regard be had to Jewish usages, nothing can seem less objectionable than this explanation of the insertion of the doxology in one

place and its omission in another. The prayer was delivered twice, to prove that it was to serve for public use and for private. Christ showed that it was to be a public prayer by giving it with a doxology; a private, by giving it without; for a doxology was that which was then used in the Temple, but not in a house.

And this further explains why our Lord did not add "Amen," in concluding his prayer on the second occasion. It was usual amongst the Jews not to add the Amen to prayers which were only petitionary, but to reserve it for expressions of thanksgiving and benediction; whereas, the doxology being omitted, the Lord's prayer, you observe, became purely petitionary. There is evidence of this in the Book of Psalms: the book is full of prayers, but the prayers do not end with Amen. If the Psalmist use the Amen, it is after such an exclamation as this: "Blessed be the Lord for evermore." You may trace just the same custom in the writings of the Apostles. Thus St. Paul asks the speaker with tongues, "How shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen, at thy giving of thanks?" and it is generally after some ascription of praise, or expression of benediction, that he adds an Amen: "The Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen." "Now the God of peace be with you all, Amen."

Now it is a fact of very great interest, which thus appears fairly established—namely, that the second delivery of the Lord's prayer, as compared with the first, goes to the proving that the petitions in this prayer are equally adapted to private and to public devotion; that we cannot find a more suitable or comprehensive form, whether for the gathering of "the great congregation," for domestic worship, or for the retirement of our closet. Our Lord did not indeed mean to tie us down to the use of this prayer, as though we were never to use any other, or never to expand into larger supplication. But he may certainly be thought to have given this prayer as a perpetual, universal model; and to have asserted its containing an expression for every want and every desire which may lawfully be made the subject of petition unto God. There

\* Lightfoot, Talmudical Exercitations upon St. Matthew.

ought to be no debate as to the suitability of this prayer for all places and seasons, after you have remarked the peculiarities of its double delivery. Do you doubt whether it be a form well adapted to the public assembly? then observe that its petitions were first uttered by our Lord, with such a doxology appended as was never then used but at the solemn gatherings in the temple of God. When you have hereby convinced yourselves of its suitability for public worship, will you hesitate as to its fitness for more private occasions? for the devotional meetings of the family, or for your own secret communion with God? Then you resemble the disciples, who, having heard the Sermon on the Mount, yet imagined a need for a different form of prayer in their religious retirements. But surely it should teach you, that, at one time as well as at another, the Lord's prayer should find its way from the heart to the lip, to know that our blessed Saviour—omitting only the doxology, and thus consecrating to the use of the closet what he had before consecrated to the use of the church—gave precisely the same form, in answer to the request of these disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

But hitherto we have made no way in commenting on the text, except that we may have explained the request of the disciples—a request which has, at first, a strange look, as though Christ had not already delivered a form of prayer, or as though what he had delivered were already forgotten. We remove this strange look, by observing our Lord's answer, and inferring from it that what the disciples now solicited was a form of private prayer: what they had previously received passed with them as designed for public occasions; and the second delivery of the same form, but with certain alterations, both shows us the want of the disciples, and teaches us how such want might best be supplied.

We will now, however, endeavor to bring before you certain other and very interesting truths, which are involved, more or less prominently, in the statements of the text. And, first, as to the employment of Christ when the disciples approach and prefer their request.

There is nothing to show distinctly whether our blessed Redeemer had been engaged in private prayer, or had been praying with his followers. But we learn, from many statements of the Evangelists, that he was in the habit of retiring for purposes of private devotion: "He withdrew into the wilderness and prayed;" he "went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer;" he was "alone praying." And perhaps it agrees best with the expressions in our text, that we should suppose our Lord to have been engaged in solitary prayer: "As he was praying in a certain place." The disciples had probably been absent from him, as when they left him sitting on Jacob's well, whilst they went into the city to buy meat. On their return they behold him at prayer: they draw reverently back; they would not intrude on him at so sacred a moment. But the thought occurs to them—"Oh, what a time for obtaining a new lesson in prayer; let us seize on it—let us ask him to instruct us whilst, like Moses coming down from the mount, his face yet shines with celestial communings." They watch the opportunity—you see how it is stated: "When he *ceased*, one of his disciples said unto him." They appear to have stood at a distance, that they might not interrupt the solemn exercise; but, so soon as they saw the exercise concluded, they pressed eagerly forward to share in its benefit.

But whether or not this were then the relative position of Christ and his disciples—whether he was alone praying, or whether they were praying with him—we know, as we have already said, that our Lord was wont to engage in solitary prayer; and there is no attitude, in which this Divine person is presented to us, wherein he is more wonderful, more deserving to be considered with all that is deepest, and most reverent, in attention. You expect to find Christ working miracles—for you know him to be God in human form; and you feel that he must give such credentials of his mission as shall suffice, if not to remove all unbelief, yet to leave it inexcusable. You even expect to find him enduring anguish—for you know him to have assumed human nature, that he might be capable of suffering; and you thoroughly as-



sent to the fundamental truth, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." But you could hardly have expected to have found him spending whole nights in prayer. What has that pure, that spotless Being, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily," to do with importunate supplication, as though he were in danger of offending his heavenly Father, or had to wring from a reluctant hand supplies of that grace, of which himself is, after all, the everlasting fountain?

There is a mysteriousness about Christ praying, which should almost warn us back, as it seems to have warned the disciples. For we are not to suppose that our Redeemer's prayers were all similar to that which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and in which there is the calmness of an Intercessor who knows that he shall prevail, or who feels that he but asks what himself has right to bestow. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, speaks of him in language which obliges us to regard him as having wrestled in prayer, wrestled even as one of us may wrestle, with much strain and anguish of mind. The Apostle there says of Christ: "Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." There may be here a special reference to our Lord's agony in the garden, when, as you remember, he besought earnestly of the Father, that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from him. But we have no right to confine the Apostle's statement to this particular scene: we may rather conclude, that, when our blessed Savior spent whole nights in prayer, his supplications were mingled with tears, and that it was with the deep emotions of one, who had blessings to procure through importunity, that he addressed himself to his Father in heaven.

You may wonder at this—you may ask how this could be; and we can only answer, that, though the Redeemer was both God and man—two natures having been indissolubly joined in his one Divine person—yet, as man, he seems to have had the same battles to

fight, the same assistance to depend upon, as though he had not also been God, but, like one of ourselves, had had the devil for his enemy, and only the Holy Ghost for his comforter. There is frequently a mistake upon this, and one which practically takes away from Christ's example all its power and persuasiveness. Why was Christ able to resist the devil? Why was Christ able to keep himself "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners?" Because, many are ready to reply, he was God as well as man. But surely this must be an erroneous reply. It supposes that when he was exposed to temptation, the Divine nature in his person came to the assistance of the human, upheld it, and made it triumphant. And how then could Christ be an example to us, who, being merely men, cannot fly from one nature in ourselves to another, from the weaker to the stronger, when attacked by certain enemies, or exposed to certain dangers?

The scriptural representation is just the opposite to this. It sets before us Christ as having been as truly a man, as truly left as a man to a man's duties, a man's trials, a man's helps, as though, at the same time, all the fulness of God-head had not dwelt in him bodily. It was not to the divine nature in his own person that he could have recourse when hard pressed by temptation: he had to lean, like one of ourselves, on the aids of the Holy Spirit, aids sought by prayer, and appropriated by faith. The divine nature in his person appears to have had nothing to do with holding up the human, but only with the conferring infinite worth on its sufferings and actions: it did not give the patience to endure, though it gave the preciousness to the endurance; it did not give the strength to obey, but the untold merit to the obedience.

And, upon this representation, we can somewhat enter, though still but remotely, into the prayers of our blessed Redeemer. He was a man, with a man's infirmities, though not with a man's sinful propensities; living, as a man, the life of faith; fighting, as a man, the battle with principalities and powers; and he had before him a task of immeasurable intenseness, which he could not contemplate, as a man, with-



out a sense of awfulness, we had almost said of dread. In this his state of fearful warfare and tremendous undertaking, he had to have recourse to those assistances which are promised to ourselves, which we have to seek for by prayer, and which even he, notwithstanding his oneness with the other persons in the Trinity, had to procure, to preserve, and to employ, through the same processes as the meanest of his disciples. Hence, it may be, his midnight watchings; hence his "strong crying and tears;" hence his prolonged and reiterated supplications.

And however mysterious, or actually incomprehensible, it may be, that a Being, as truly God as he was man, should, as man, have been as much thrown on a man's resources as though he had not also been God, yet what a comfort is it that Christ was thus identified with ourselves, that he went through our trials, met our dangers, and experienced our difficulties! We could have had but little confidence in committing our prayers to a high priest who had never had to pray himself. But oh, how it should encourage us to wrestle in prayer, to be fervent and importunate in prayer, that it is just what our blessed Lord did before us; and that having, as our Mediator, known continually the agony of supplication, he must, as our Advocate, be all the more disposed, in the language of the Psalmist, to put our tears into his bottle, and to gain audience for our cries. It might strike me with greater amazement to see Christ raise the dead. It might fill me with deeper awe, to behold Christ upon the cross. But it ministers most to my comfort, to look at Christ upon his knees. Then I most know him as my brother in all but my sinfulness, myself in all but the corruption which would have disabled him for being my deliverer.

Oh, let it be with us as with the disciples; let us gaze on the Redeemer as he is "praying in a certain place;" and we shall be more than ever encouraged to the asking from him whatsoever we can need. Then we have him in the attitude which should give confidence, let our want be what it may; especially if it be a freer breathing of the soul—and this breathing is prayer—which we desire to obtain.

Christ will sometimes seem so great, so far removed from ourselves, that the timid want courage to address him. Even suffering hardly appears to bring him down to our level; if he weep, it is over our sins that his tears fall, and not over his own; if he is stricken, it is that by his stripes we may be healed; if he die, it is that we may live. But when he prays, he prays for himself. Not but that he also prays for others, and even we, too, are required to do this. But he prays for himself, though he does not suffer for himself. He has wants of his own for which he asks a supply, dangers against which he seeks protection, difficulties in which he entreats guidance. Oh, who will now be afraid of going to him to be taught? Who will not feel, as he sees Jesus "praying in a certain place," that now is the precious moment for casting ourselves before him, and exclaiming with the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Now it is a very important use which has thus been made of the text, in that the approach of the disciples to the Savior, at the moment of his rising from prayer, serves to admonish us as to Christ's power of sympathy, "in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted;" and to encourage us to go to him in the full assurance of his being as well able to understand, as to satisfy, our wants. But there is still a very beautiful account to which to turn the fact, that it was immediately on his rising from his knees, that our Lord delivered, for the second time, his form of prayer to his disciples. There was, as we have already hinted, an evident appropriateness in the request of the disciples, if you consider it relatively to the employment in which Christ had just been engaged. It was not a request to be taught how to preach—that might have been the more suitable had Christ just delivered his sermon on the Mount. It was not a request to be enabled to work miracles—that might have more naturally followed, had Christ just been healing the sick or casting out devils. But it was a request for instruction in prayer, coming immediately on Christ's having been praying, as though the disciples felt that he must then have known

most of the difficulties of prayer, and also of its privileges; and that, his soul having been engaged in high communion with God, his tongue might be expected to clothe itself with the richest expressions of desire and the most potent words of entreaty.

And you will all feel how natural, or rather, how just, was this thought of the disciples, that the best moment for a lesson from Christ in prayer, was when Christ himself had just finished praying. It is precisely the thought which we ourselves should entertain, and on which we should be ready to act, in regard of any eminent saint from whom we might wish instruction and assistance. If, feeling my want of some other form of prayer than that which I possess, I determined to apply to a christian distinguished by his piety, and to ask him to compose for me a form, at what moment, if I might choose, would I prefer my request? At the moment of his rising from his knees. When, I should say to myself, is his mind so likely to be in a devotional attitude, when may I so justly expect the frame and the feeling adapted to the dictating pregnant and prevailing petitions, as when he is fresh from the footstool of God, and has not yet lost the unction which may be believed to have been on him, as he communed with Heaven?

But, were I to address myself to him at this moment with my request, and were he, in reply, simply, but solemnly, to repeat to me the Lord's Prayer, what should I conclude? Certainly that, in his judgment, and when moreover that judgment was best circumstanced for deciding, no prayer could be composed so admirably adapted to the expression of my wants as this; and that, having this, I required no other. It is a separate question whether his decision would be right; we now only urge, that, in no conceivable method, could he deliver a stronger testimony to the excellence of the Lord's Prayer.

But this is exactly the kind of testimony which is furnished by the circumstances related in our text. Christ, on rising from his knees, is asked by his disciples for a form of prayer adapted to seasons of private devotion. He does nothing but repeat the

prayer which he had delivered in his Sermon on the Mount. What an evidence that no better could be furnished! Fresh as he was from direct intercourse with his Father in heaven, the spirit warmed, if we may so speak, through devotional exercise, he could furnish no fuller, no more comprehensive expression of the wants and desires, which, as creatures, we may spread before our Creator, than the few and brief petitions which he had combined on a previous occasion.

There is nothing which gives me so exalted an idea of the worth and excellence of the Lord's Prayer as this. In many ways, indeed, may this worth and excellence be demonstrated; every new demonstration not only establishing the points in debate, but suggesting material for additional proof. And we owe much to commentaries on the Lord's Prayer by learned and pious men, who, expanding its several petitions, have shown that there is nothing which we can lawfully desire, whether for this world or for the next, whether as inhabitants of earth or as candidates for heaven, which is not virtually contained in these few sentences. Other forms of prayer, so far as they are scriptural and sound, are but the Lord's Prayer, beaten out, its syllables spread, as they may be, into volumes. Indeed, there is no slight analogy between this prayer and the law. The law was given twice, even as this prayer was given twice. The law, meaning thereby the Ten Commandments, is a summary of all things to be done; and this prayer, of all things to be desired. The law divides itself into duties which have respect to God and duties which have respect to man; and, similarly, the prayer contains petitions for God's honor, and then petitions for others and ourselves. And as the few precepts of the moral law, when expounded by our blessed Redeemer, grew—like the few loaves which, beneath his creative touch, became the food of thousands—till there was a command for every action, yea, a rule for each word and each thought; so has the prayer only to be drawn out by a spiritual apprehension, and there is a breathing for every want, an expression for every desire, an ejaculation for every emergence.

But whilst all this may be satisfactorily shown through lengthened and patient inquiry, and whilst we may hereby reach conviction of such a fulness and such a comprehensiveness in the Lord's Prayer, that we ask every thing which we ought to ask in offering its petitions, the short, but equally sure, mode of establishing the fact, is to observe how this prayer was the second time delivered. I am never so impressed with the beauty, the depth, the largeness, yea, the inexhaustibleness of this form, as when I hear it uttered by Christ in reply to the request of his disciples. If I ever feel wearied by repetitions of this prayer, or tempted to think that some variation from it would be an improvement, I can look at the circumstances of its second delivery, and want no other commentary to convict me of error. It is not the first delivery which is so replete and reproachful in evidence. I receive indeed the prayer with all docility, and all reverence, as it falls from the Savior's lips in his Sermon on the Mount. But he then delivered it as a form for public prayer, suited to numbers who might not have made much progress in religion: had he been afterwards asked, he might have furnished a yet intenser and more spiritual model, for such as were of higher growth in piety. Besides, our Lord was then preaching; and the temperament, if we may use the expression, of the preacher, is not likely to be that which is most adapted to prayer. Without confounding the Redeemer with one of ourselves, we may, in a measure, justly reason from ourselves, when considering what occupation is most congenial with devotional feeling. And, certainly, the attitude of an instructor does not commend itself as best suited to the spirit of a suppliant. If I wanted tuition from a preacher in prayer, I should not wish it from him whilst he was preaching, not even though prayer might be the subject of his sermon. I would go to him in his closet rather than in his pulpit; that, in the more subdued tone of mind, in the calmer, the more chastened and abased sentiments which may be expected in a man prostrate before God, as compared with the same man haranguing his fellow-men,

I might have better ground of hope for those contrite expressions, those burdened cadences, those glowing aspirations, which beset the supplications of one fallen but redeemed. And it is in no sense derogatory to the blessed Redeemer, to say, that if I had only his sermon-delivery of his prayer, it would not, of itself, have convinced me that even he could not have given a more admirable form. I might have felt, and without violation to the awe and reverence due to such a being, that the moment when I should have best liked to hear him express himself in prayer, was not the moment of his upbraiding the hypocrites who stood "in the corners of the streets," or the heathen who were noted for their "vain repetitions."

But the prayer is given a second time, after considerable interval, given that it may serve for private devotion; given by Christ, not when addressing a multitude, but when just risen from his knees. Oh, I want nothing further to tell me, that the Lord's prayer is fuller than human need can exhaust, humbler than human worthlessness can sink, higher than human piety can soar. I ask no learned commentary, no labored exposition; I have Christ's own testimony, given exactly when that testimony has the greatest possible power, that nothing can be added to the prayer, nothing excogitated of loftier, intenser, more disinterested, and yet more self-seeking supplication, when I find that it was when he had been "praying in a certain place," and as "he ceased" from his prayer, that he re-delivered the same form to his disciples, and in answer to their entreaty, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Now you will all feel for yourselves that the practical point involved in this express and striking testimony of Christ to the fulness of his prayer, and its appropriateness to all persons, places, and seasons, is, that there must be something wrong in the man who finds the Lord's prayer insufficient or unsuitable. We are far from meaning that no other form of prayer should be used: the mind will often wish, will often need, to dwell on some one particular desire; and though, beyond question, that desire has expression in



the Lord's prayer, it is there so condensed that he who would be importunate at the mercy-seat may be aided by a more expanded statement.

But, at all events, enough has been adduced to prove that the Lord's prayer should enter largely both into public and private devotion, and that, though it ought not to supersede every other, yet ought no other to be a substitute for it. And if we had but a minute to spend in prayer, what but the Lord's prayer should occupy that minute? better that we gather into that minute all that can be asked for time and for eternity, than that we give it to any less pregnant expression of the wants and desires of a Christian. But examine yourselves in this matter; compare your own sense of the sufficiency of the Lord's prayer with the remarkable attestation to that sufficiency which we have found given by our Savior himself: and if the prayer still seem to you inadequate; if, in short, you feel as though you could not pray sufficiently, if, on any account, you were actually limited to the use of this prayer, then let the comparison set you on the searching deeply into the state of your hearts. For, surely, he has reason to fear that his desires should be checked rather than cherished, his wants denied rather than declared, who can find no expression for them in petitions which were not only dictated by Christ, but affirmed by him to comprehend whatsoever we might ask.

But, commending this to your serious meditation, we would, in conclusion, dwell for a moment on the reference made by the disciples to the instruction in prayer which had been furnished by the Baptist. They ask, you observe, of Christ, that he would teach them to pray "as John also taught his disciples." We have no means of ascertaining what form of prayer had been given by the Baptist. But it should be observed that the Jews' daily and common prayers, their ordinary and occasional, consisted chiefly of benedictions and doxologies; they had, indeed, their petitionary or supplicatory prayers; but these were few in number, and less copious. Now it seems reasonable to suppose that the Baptist taught a form of prayer

differing from what the Jewish forms were; he had to inculcate other doctrines than those to which the people were used; and it can hardly, therefore, be doubted that he instructed them to pray in a manner more accordant with the new dispensation which he was commissioned to announce as "at hand." If, standing as he did between the Law and the Gospel, John did not fully unfold the peculiar truths which Christ was afterwards to announce, he nevertheless spake of things, the attaining which supposed that petitions were presented unto God—how then can we question that he taught his followers to pray for these things?

Hence, the probability, at least, is, that in opposition to the custom of the Jews, whose prayers were mostly benedictory, John gave his disciples prayers which were chiefly petitionary; and that, when our Lord was asked for instruction in prayer, similar to what had been afforded by the Baptist, the thing sought was some form of supplication, strictly and properly so called. And this agrees excellently with the answer of our Lord; for by omitting the doxology with which he had concluded his prayer on the first delivery, he gave a form of devotion which was purely petitionary.

But the disciples of Christ may not have referred to the particular character of the form of prayer given by John, but only to the fact, that the Baptist had furnished his followers with some form or another. And then there is something very interesting in their request, as grounding itself on what had been done by a teacher of far less authority and wisdom than their own. It was as much as to say, even "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" gave lessons in prayer; and shall not the voice of Him of whom that stern voice was the harbinger, instruct us how to approach the Lord of the whole earth? The disciples of the forerunner had the privilege of hearing from him what petitions should be offered—shall not the disciples of the Messiah enjoy a similar privilege, though greater in proportion as he is greater than his messenger?

There is then an argument, so to

speak, from the instruction afforded by the inferior teacher, to that which may be expected, or hoped for, from the superior. And it is an argument of which we may legitimately make use, whether as pledging God to give, or emboldening us to ask. We may rightly reason that, if the disciples of the lower master have been favored with a lesson, the disciples of the higher will not be left uninstructed. We may rightly reason, yea, we may present ourselves before our Savior with the reasoning on our lips, that if, not only the disciples of the Baptist, but the disciples also of natural religion, have been taught to pray, the disciples of the Christ shall be yet more deeply and powerfully schooled.

We have sat, as it were, at the feet of nature; and in her every work and her every gesture, in her silences and in her utterances, she has bidden us

wait upon God, and seek at his hands the supply of our wants. There is nothing on which creation is more eloquent, nothing more syllabled by the animate and the inanimate, by the music of its mighty movements, the rush of its forces, the lowing of its herds, than that all things hang on the universal Parent, and that his ear is open to the universal petition. And if even nature do thus instruct us to pray, what may we not expect from the Lord our Redeemer? We will approach him, encouraged by the tuition of a prophet, which is, at best, but his messenger or herald. We will say to him, Even the stars, the forests, and the mountains, the works of thine Almighty hands, bid us bow the knee, and supplicate the invisible God. But we need a higher, a more spiritual, lesson. Lord, do Thou teach us to pray, seeing that even nature hath taught her disciples.

## SERMON X.

### PECULIARITIES IN THE MIRACLE IN THE COASTS OF DECAPOLIS.

“And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.”—Mark, 7 : 33, 34.

We do not bring the succeeding verse into our text. You know that the words which we have read to you relate to the Lord our Redeemer; and you need not be told, that, with him, to attempt was to accomplish a miracle. The subject of the present miracle was “one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech;” and the result of our Lord’s command, “Ephphatha,” was, that “straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.”

The miracles of our Lord were as diversified as are human wants and infirmities: what sorrow was there for the soothing of which, what sickness for the healing of which, he did not employ his supernatural powers? But the miracles were diversified, not only as to the things done, but as to the manner also in which they were done: sometimes, indeed for the most part, our Lord only spake the word or laid his hand on the suffering; at other times, virtue went out from him, when

touched by the afflicted; and in some few instances, amongst which is that recorded in the text, he employed outward signs, though not such as could have possessed any natural efficacy.

We doubt not that many useful lessons might be drawn from the different modes wherein Christ thus displayed his miraculous power. Considering miracles as parables, figurative exhibitions of the doctrines, as well as forcible evidences of the divine origin, of christianity, we may believe that they are not void of instruction in the minutest of their circumstances, but furnish, in every particular, something on which the christian may meditate with advantage. Neither is this true only when you assign a parabolic character to the miracles of our Lord: setting aside the parabolic character, and observing merely how difference in mode was adapted to difference in circumstances, you will often find occasion to admire a display of wisdom and benevolence, to confess the narrative profitable, not only as adding another testimony to the divine power of Christ, but as showing how he sought to make that power subservise his great design of bringing sinners to faith in himself.

We shall find this exemplified as we proceed with the examination of the narrative which we have taken as our subject of discourse. Our foregoing observations will have prepared you for our not insisting on the display of divine power, but engaging you with the peculiarities which attended the display—peculiarities from which we shall endeavor to extract evidences of Christ's goodness, and lessons for ourselves. With this purpose in view, let us go straightway to the scene presented by the Evangelist: let us follow the Redeemer as he takes the deaf man aside from the multitude, and let us observe, with the attentiveness due to the actions of One who did "all things well," the course which he adopts in unstopping his ears and loosening his tongue.

Now you must all be aware, that, in order to constitute a miracle, properly so called, there must be the absence of all instrumentality which is naturally adapted to produce the result. Sickness may be removed by the application of remedies; but he who applies them is never regarded as working a

miracle; he may, indeed, excite surprise by using means which shall be rapidly effectual in a case which had been thought desperate, but, whatever the tribute paid to his science and skill, the whole virtue is assumed to lie in the remedies employed; and no one imagines, when looking on the recovered individual, that there has been any thing approaching to the exercise of supernatural power. But if the applied remedies were such as had evidently no tendency to the effecting a cure, you would begin to suspect something of miraculous agency; and yet further, if no remedies whatsoever were used, if the sickness departed at the mere bidding of the physician, you would be almost sure that God had distinctly and unusually interfered—interfered so as to suspend the known laws which ordinarily determine his workings. So long, perhaps, as any remedy appeared to be applied, you would be scrupulous as to admitting a miracle; the remedy might, indeed, seem quite unsuited to the end for which it was employed, not possessing any known virtue for removing the disease; but still it might possess properties not before ascertained; and it is easier, and perhaps juster, to conclude the sickness overcome through some unsuspected energy in the visible means, than through some invisible power altogether unconnected with those means.

Hence it is a necessary criterion in the determining a miracle, that it be altogether independent on second causes, and therefore be performed without any natural instrument. And this is a criterion to which the miracles of our Lord may safely be brought: it was only on one or two occasions that any thing external was employed, and even on these it could not be suspected that means were applied in which any virtue dwelt. The most remarkable of such occasions was that of the healing of the man who had been born blind: our Lord "spat upon the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Here there was a great deal of preparation: and had not the case been that of blindness from the birth, which was accounted incurable through any natural means, it might have been



suspected that Christ had applied some powerful ointment, which, left for a time on the defective organ, and then washed off, would effect, as he had discovered, a radical cure. Even in this case, however, it never seems to have occurred to the Jews, that the thing which had been wrought might not have been actually supernatural: the whole process was accurately reported to the Pharisees; but, though they were most eager to disprove or depreciate the cure, they never thought of ascribing any virtue to the clay; it was manifestly so void of all natural efficacy for the restoration of sight, that they treated the cure as wrought by a word, without even the apparent employment of any second cause.

Nevertheless, we may safely admit, that, had our Lord always acted in this manner, had he never performed a miracle without using some outward instrumentality, there might have been room for suspecting that a connection existed between the instrumentality and the result, and that, therefore, it was not necessarily beyond a doubt, that miracle had been actually wrought. There can, however, be no place for such a suspicion, inasmuch as the occasions were very rare on which our Lord did more than speak that word which was always "with power." But we are bound to consider whether, in the few cases where external application was employed, there was not some reason for the seeming departure from a rule, which may be said to have been prescribed by the very nature of miracle. If we find this reason in any one case, it may, probably, be extended to all; and we shall therefore confine ourselves to the instance presented by our subject of discourse.

Here, as in the case of the blind man, there was an external appliance, though not equally calculated to suggest doubt as to the actualness of the miracle. Our Lord put his fingers into the man's ears, and then spat, and touched his tongue. It could hardly be imagined, by the most suspicious or incredulous of beings, that there was any natural connection between what our Lord thus did, and the effect which was produced; and that, consequently, Christ was nothing but a skilful physician, acquainted with remedies which had

not yet been discovered by others of his race. If there were any virtue in the action used by Christ, it was manifestly a virtue derived altogether from his superhuman character: allowing that there was power in his touch, it could only have been from the same reason that there was power in his word: the finger was "the finger of God," even as the voice was that which had spoken all things into being.

Yet it could not have been without any meaning, though it may have been without any efficaciousness to the healing of disease, that Christ employed these outward signs: some purpose must have been subserved, forasmuch as we may be sure that there was never any thing useless or superfluous in the actions of our Lord. And the reason why Christ thus touched the defective organs, before uttering the word which was to speak them into health, may be found, as is generally allowed, in the circumstances of the man on whom the miracle was about to be wrought. This man, you will observe, does not seem to have come to Christ of his own accord: it is expressly stated, "And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, and they beseech him to put his hand upon him." The whole was done by the relatives or friends of the afflicted individual: for any thing that appears to the contrary, he himself may have had no knowledge of Jesus; and, indeed, since his condition disqualified him for holding any conversation, it is likely that he was in a great degree ignorant of the Prophet that had arisen in the land.

But this very fact rendered it important that means should be taken to acquaint him thoroughly with the person that effected his cure, not only in order to his own satisfaction, but to qualify him to bear witness in favor of Christ. And it is easily seen that what our Lord did was exactly adapted to such a purpose as this. He took him aside from the multitude, because his attention was likely to be distracted by the crowd, and Christ wished to fix it on himself as the author of his cure. Had he healed him immediately, and in the midst of the throng, the man might have had no distinct impression as to who had been his benefactor. There-

fore was he separated from the throng; and therefore, yet further, when separated, was he addressed by Christ through those senses which remained unimpaired: through sight and through touch. Christ could not speak to him, as was his ordinary wont, and demand from him a confession of faith in his power to heal; the man was deaf, so that no question could be put to him, and he had an impediment in his speech which would have prevented his replying. But he could see, and could feel what Christ did; and therefore our Lord supplied the place of speech, by touching the tongue and putting his fingers into the ears—for this was virtually saying that he was about to act on those organs—and, by looking up to heaven, for this was informing the deaf man that the healing power must come from above.

The whole action would seem to have been symbolical, and accurately suited to the circumstances of the case. Translate the action into words, and what have we but such sayings as these? "I have taken thee aside from the multitude, that thou mightest observe and remember who it is to whom thou hast been brought. Thine organs are imperfect: here are members of thy body, which are useless to the ends for which they were given, and I am about to act on them with a power which shall supply all defects. Yet I would have thee know that this power is but a credential of my having come forth from God, and should produce in thee belief of my prophetic character. Behold, therefore: I lift my eyes unto heaven, whilst I utter the word which shall give thee hearing and speech."

Such, we say, was virtually the address of our Lord to the man on whom he was about to operate with supernatural power; not an address in language, which was precluded by the peculiarities of the case, but in significative, symbolical action, which is often to the full as expressive as words. And, therefore, it was not without a great design and an important meaning that our Lord departed from his ordinary rule, and ran, as it might have seemed, the risk of bringing the miracle into question, by the privacy in which he wrought it and the external agency

of which he made use. How easily might it have been said that he took the man aside from the multitude, because what he was about to do would not bear being inspected, but involved some deception which could succeed only in a corner. And if suspicion had been excited by his thus requiring a retired place for the performance of the cure, how might that suspicion have been confirmed, when the man came to tell in what way he had been healed? "See," the people might have said, "there was no miracle at all; he applied certain remedies, and he would not suffer us to be near, lest we should discover his secret."

But Christ could venture to brave all this risk: his miraculous power was too well established to be treated as a trick. Some there were who blasphemously ascribed it to Satan; but none, as it would seem, had the hardihood to deny its existence. Yet even the appearance of place for suspicion would not have been given, without sufficient cause, by one who was anxious to leave no possible excuse for the doubting whether or not he were the promised Messiah. And the sufficient cause is found in the circumstances of the case. It did not content the Redeemer to heal bodily infirmities: he sought to reach the inward man through what he did for the outward. If he gave the power of hearing and of speaking, he longed that the unstopped ear might hearken to the Gospel, and the loosened tongue be employed on the high praises of God. But, in order to such ends, it was indispensable that the man should know Jesus as his benefactor, and be persuaded that the power, exerted on his behalf, was wholly from above. But how shall he be instructed in such particulars? He is shut up in that desolation and loneliness, which a closed ear and a fastened tongue necessarily produce, and is not accessible through the avenues by which information is commonly conveyed. I will speak to him, the Redeemer seems to say, through the senses which have been spared to him: sight and touch shall be instrumental to the carrying of truth into his yet darkened soul. O blessed Savior, how great was thy condescension, how unwearyed thine endeavor to do good to

sinners! As when thou wouldest teach thy disciples humility, thou didst set a little child in the midst of them; and when thou wouldest warn them of the peril of unfruitfulness, thou didst cause the blighted fig-tree to stand in their path—so now didst thou graciously instruct by significative action; and I see nothing but the merciful, the compassionate, the patient Redeemer, bent on doing good, on instructing and blessing the unworthiest, when I see our Lord taking the deaf man aside from the multitude, and putting his fingers into his ears, and touching his tongue, and looking up to heaven.

But we have probably said enough in explanation of our Lord's having apparently made use of external instrumentality in effecting the miracle which is under review. We now wish to lead you to a wholly different topic: we would have it observed whether the possession of miraculous power did not operate upon Christ in a manner unlike that in which it would, most probably, operate on ourselves. We will not examine whether, if any one of us were gifted with the ability of doing marvellous things, he would not be likely to covet occasions of display, to delight in opportunities of manifesting the energy, when it would excite most amazement, and be hailed with the plaudits of a thousand spectators. Certainly, it were hardly to exaggerate that corruption which adheres to the best of the children of men, to say that the temptation would be found very strong of exerting miraculous power in an ostentatious mode, employing it to purposes which might astonish by their strangeness, and before multitudes whose applauses might be thereby secured. And, just as certainly, there can be nothing further removed from ostentation, than our Lord's use of those wonder-working powers with which he was endowed. His miracles were always remarkable for simplicity, for the absence of every appearance of pompous exhibition: he never wrought a marvel but when there was good to be done; and, in his hands, superhuman might was manifestly consecrated to the benefiting others, and not to the magnifying himself.

But let us admit that miraculous power might be possessed by one

of ourselves, and that, along with it, there might be such measure of grace as would prevent any thing of pride or ostentation in its use. We may still find something to distinguish this man of superhuman energy from the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to this, let us ask any one of you, whether the inability to relieve misery be not almost as distressing as that misery itself? If I found one of my fellow-creatures dying from want, what wretchedness should I endure if I were absolutely destitute of all power of procuring him food! Whereas, on the other hand, with what unmingled gladness should I hasten to his dwelling, if I carried with me the means of supplying his necessities, if I had only to open the door, and plenty would flow into the dreary abode! I do not think that I could be sad at such a moment. My own cares might be many, my own grievances heavy; but that I could communicate happiness, would for the time make me happy; and the eye would be bright, and the voice would be joyous, as I said to the sufferer, "Be of good cheer."

The like may especially be affirmed in regard of any case of sickness. How melancholy is it to stand over the bed of one writhing in pain, and to feel that the best which the best affection can do, is to weep and to pray; so utterly beyond all known remedies or assuagements is the malady whose victim is before us! O for the power of working a miracle! With what alacrity, what exultation, would any one of us command the disease to depart, if there were such energy in his word that it could suspend nature's laws. I am sure that there is not one of you, who, if he possessed the power, and heard of a fellow-creature in terrible anguish, would not rush to the side of the sufferer, eager to employ the power on his behalf, and enraptured with the thought of being able to relieve. Or, if the case were not one of acute pain, but only of defect in some bodily organ, with what pure, what unmingled satisfaction, should we exert ourselves on supplying what nature had denied.

There is something wonderfully interesting, but, at the same time, distressing, in the visiting the asylums



which have been reared for the reception of the blind or the dumb. It is marvellous to observe what mental and moral progress may be made in spite of the deficiency; how the senses, which are possessed, may be available to the very offices of those which are wanting, so that the blind child shall read the Bible with its fingers, and the dumb communicate in writing all that passes in its spirit. We do not hesitate to call it the finest exercise of a power, which is only just short of supernatural, that, when the eye refuses to collect the rays from the material creation, the hand can be instructed to gather in all the beauty and magnificence of that spiritual landscape which God hath developed in the pages of his word; and that upon the soul, which seemed devoted to everlasting midnight, because not accessible through the medium of speech, there is poured, through the eye, all that mighty illumination which hath flashed, in these last days, from "the Father of lights."

But, with every confession of the wonderfulness and beauty of the spectacle presented by an asylum whether for the blind or the dumb, it must be admitted that there is something distressing in the sight of numbers who never looked on the glory of the heavens, or never drank in the melody of speech. Which of you, then, would not feel himself a happy man, if suddenly invested with the power of bidding the blind behold the human face, and the dumb hear and use the human voice? We should all perhaps be ready to charge the possessor of such a power with something worse than stoicism, with a hardness of heart which made it strange that God should have endowed him with so signal a gift, if he did not manifest the greatest alacrity in bestowing sight on the darkened eye-ball, and unchaining the speechless tongue; or if, when exercising his power, he did not show that to exercise it was a source of the intensest delight. And yet, my brethren, it does not appear—at least, not always—to have been with a feeling of pleasure that our blessed Lord relieved the woes to which flesh is heir. Oh, it is a strange contrast between the scene presented by our text and what probably would be the scene, if any amongst

ourselves had the power of healing the deaf and the dumb. It shall be to one of you that this poor man is brought by anxious and supplicating friends. One of you shall be reputed able to unstop his ears and loosen his tongue; and therefore shall they, who are eager for his cure, come to you imploringly. It is no false rumor; you have the power; you are ready to exercise it. I see you rejoice in the opportunity; you can hardly speak the healing word for gladness at being able to confer so great a boon. Yes; this is natural, this would almost seem unavoidable; and yet, oh wonderful, it was not thus that our Redeemer did good. He manifested no feeling of pleasure. On the contrary, you might have thought it a pain to him to relieve misery; for the narrative tells us, that, at the instant of giving utterance to the omnipotent word, he showed signs as of a burdened and disquieted spirit: "He sighed"—not, he smiled; not, he rejoiced—but "He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

Now we really do not know a more affecting testimony to the fact, that our Lord was "a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief," than is thus furnished by his sighing at the moment of working a benevolent miracle. If ever he experienced gladness of spirit, you would think that it must have been when communicating happiness—yet even then "He sighed." He sighed in the act of blessing, as though the boon were wrung from him, and he would rather have denied it. Neither is this a solitary instance of Christ's manifestation of grief when engaged in giving pleasure. We have often had occasion to point out to you that the tears, which he wept at the grave of Lazarus, were not tears for the dead. There is no necessity, in order to the establishing the comforting truth of Christ's perfect humanity, and of his sympathy with our griefs, that we should suppose him weeping at the grave of his friend, as any one of us might weep over a kinsman or child. Indeed, there is no argument for Christ's fellow-feeling with the bereaved, in the tears of which the bereaved so often make mention; for there is not one of us who could bewail the dead, if he were under the precise circumstances of Christ; and

therefore the Mediator's tears can be no evidence of that which, blessed be his name, is incontestably established from other proofs, his thorough sympathy with the mourning. Send any one of you to the grave where a dear friend lies buried—send him with the power, and for the purpose, of reanimating that friend—and he could not weep as he went; at least, if he wept, they would be tears of joy which he shed; for pleasure, like pain, can force drops from eyes which have been darkened by sin. But the tears of Christ were not tears of joy; for we read not only that he wept, but that "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled;" and that "again groaning in himself, he came to the grave." Hence there is no parrying the conclusion, that our blessed Savior was unhappy at the very moment when you would most have expected him to be happy, because on the point of making others happy; whilst all our foregoing statements, as to the pleasure which would be felt by any one of ourselves in the exercise of supernatural power, are only the more forcible, if the occasion of that exercise might bear any resemblance to the raising of Lazarus.

It is, therefore, no undue inference from the circumstance of Christ's sighing at the instant of working the miracle before us, when we take it in evidence of a depression of spirit which would not give way before even that most happy-making thing, the making others happy. And again must we state that of all the incidental proofs—proofs not the less conclusive because easily overlooked—of our Lord's having been "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," there is, perhaps, none of a more touching or plaintive character than is thus furnished by our text. Undoubtedly we vastly under-rate the sufferings of the Savior, when we confine them to scenes where persecution was open, and anguish apparent. Just because there is little said of what Jesus endured until we reach the dread things of Gethsemane and Calvary, it were strange, it were sinful, to conclude that he was not heavily oppressed through the whole of his life. When an apostle bids us "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself"—

thus making "the contradiction of sinners," which was not the thing of a moment, but of his every day, from first to last, the description of his endurances—he may be said to assert that suffering was his unmingled portion, as though, with one of old, his own illustrious type, he might pathetically have said, "My tears have been my meat day and night." And we may not question that such was his portion. He was a sacrifice from the cradle to the grave; every instant, because an instant of humiliation and endurance added something to the mysterious and mighty oblation. How could it have been otherwise? for having come "unto his own," and being rejected by "his own," living in the midst of "a wicked and adulterous generation," which he vainly strove to save from destruction, there must continually have been a pressure on his innocent spirit, a pressure all the more intense, because not betrayed by any outward sign.

The expression "acquainted with grief" is wonderfully touching, and perhaps singularly accurate. Grief was, as it were, his bosom friend; it had made way into his breast, and there set up its home. His was not an occasional meeting with grief; it was acquaintance, a deep, dark, bitter familiarity. Oh, when you call Christ's afflictions to mind, afflictions endured "for us men and for our salvation," then think not only of the garden and the cross; consider him as having been incessantly, as well as intensely, disquieted—momentarily on the cross, whence divine justice sought the penalties which ourselves had deserved. And if you want evidence of this continuousness of sorrow, the inconsiderable incident—inconsiderable only in that you might read it a hundred times and hardly pause to observe it—the inconsiderable incident mentioned in our text might suffice as a proof. What so gratifying a thing as the being able to do good? when can a good man feel so happy as in communicating happiness? If Christ were not gladdened in making others glad, when could he have been joyful? And, nevertheless, he was not then gladdened; it was then that "he sighed." He had gone aside from the



multitude, so that there was, perhaps, no one to observe him. His only companion was deaf, so that though he might have been seen to weep, he could not be heard to sigh. Therefore was the sigh quite, so to speak, between himself and his Father in heaven. It was as though he had taken advantage of the being alone and unnoticed, to gain a moment's vent for that climbing sorrow which he was not willing to display before disciples who loved him. And I seem to need nothing more to tell me how continually that heart was wrung, into which sin, which makes all our anguish, never had penetrated, than the simple recital that, before our blessed Savior uttered the word which was to unstop the ear and loosen the tongue, "he sighed;" "looking up to heaven, *he sighed*, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

But wherefore did Christ sigh? was it only in evidence of the general depression of a spirit, wearied and overwrought by contact with wickedness? or came the sigh from a consciousness that the individual before him would be injured, rather than benefited, by the miracle about to be wrought? We cannot, of course, speak with any certainty in reply to these questions, forasmuch as the sacred historian gives no account of the feelings which then struggled in the mind of our Lord. Yet there are sundry interpretations which we may put upon the sigh; and if we cannot determine the true, we may, perhaps, draw from each some material of instruction.

We may be sure, in the first place, as to what did not cause the sigh; it argued no distrust of his heavenly Father, though it followed immediately on his looking up to his abode. The looking up to heaven was rather to direct the deaf man's attention to the source of healing power, than to obtain a supply of that power. There was the same lifting up of the eyes on the occasion of the raising of Lazarus; and then Christ stated the reason of this public appeal to the Father. "And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that

they may believe that thou hast sent me." He was always sure, you observe, of the ability to work a miracle; but on certain occasions he saw fit to preface the working by an appeal to God, in order to impress on spectators that his power was from above, and not, as had been blasphemously said, from beneath.

Hence, the sigh could have had no such connection with the looking up to heaven, as might argue mistrust of the Father whose will he had come down to accomplish. But, nevertheless, we may readily understand how, on the instant of working a miracle, a glance towards heaven might cause Christ to sigh. Wherefore had he descended from that bright abode if not to achieve its being opened to the lost race of man? And wherefore did he work miracles, if not to fix attention on himself as the promised seed of the woman, who, through obedience and death, was to reinstate our lineage in the paradise from which they had been exiled for sin? There was a sufficiency in the satisfaction which he was about to make, to remove the curse from every human being, and to place all the children of Adam in a more glorious position than their common parent had forfeited. But he knew too well that, in regard of multitudes, his endurance would be fruitless, fruitless, at least, in the sense of obtaining their salvation, though they cannot be in that of vindicating the attributes of God, and leaving the impenitent self-condemned at the judgment.

Therefore, it may be, did Christ sigh; and that, too, immediately after looking up to heaven. I can read the sigh; it is full of most pathetic speech. "Yonder," the Redeemer seems to say, "is the home of my Father, of the cherubim and the seraphim. I would fain conduct to that home the race which I have made one with Myself, by so assuming their nature as to join it with the divine. I am about to work another miracle—to make, that is, another effort to induce the rebellious to take Me as their leader to yon glorious domain. But it will be fruitless; I foresee, but too certainly, that I shall still be 'despised and rejected of men.'" Then who can wonder that a sigh was thus interposed between the looking up to hea-



ven and the uttering the healing word? The eye of the Redeemer saw further than our own. It pierced the vault which bounds our vision, and beheld the radiant thrones which his agony would purchase for the children of men. And that men—men whom he loved with a love of which that agony alone gives the measure—should refuse these thrones, and thereby not only put from them happiness, but incur wretchedness without limit or end—must not this have been always a crushing thing to the Savior? and more especially when, by glancing at the glories which might have been theirs, he had heightened his thought of their madness and misery? I am sure that were we striving to prevail on some wretched being to enter an asylum where he would not only be sheltered from imminent danger, but surrounded with all the material of happiness, a look at that asylum, with its securities and comforts, would cause us to feel sorer than ever at heart, as we turned to make one more endeavor, likely to be useless as every preceding, to overcome the obduracy which must end in destruction. Therefore ought we readily to understand why the Redeemer, bent only on raising to glory a race, of which he foresaw that myriads would voluntarily sink down to fire and shame, gave token of a distressed and disquieted spirit, between looking towards heaven and working a miracle—as though the look had almost made him reluctant for the work—"looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

But there may have been reasons, personal to the individual about to be healed, which caused Christ to preface the miracle with a sigh. We have spoken of the delight which it would yield to a benevolent man, if he could go into an asylum for the blind or the deaf, and communicate by a word the senses which were wanting in the objects around him. But did we not somewhat exaggerate, when we supposed that the pleasure would be quite unalloyed? It could hardly fail but that a suspicion would cross the mind of the individual, who had the power of giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, that, but too probably, there was some one in the group to whom it would be no

blessing to obtain the deficient sense; who, if made to see, would but enslave himself to "the lust of the eye," or who, if enabled to hear and to speak, would but listen to evil, and employ his tongue in dishonoring his God. We know, too well, how largely does our every sense give inlet to temptation; so that, possibly, the want of one of these senses might often cause the soul to be assaulted with less vehemence from without. And it is easy to believe that a blind person, to whom sight were suddenly and miraculously given, would find an inundation, as it were, of new and strange desires, rushing on him through those magic organs which, like Satan on the mountain, show us "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;" and that a deaf person, who should obtain instantaneously the hearing ear, and the speaking tongue, would be so bewildered by the new process of receiving and communicating thought, and so enabled to sin in new ways, that, if there were question only of the advantageousness of his condition in regard of another world, he had better have been confined to the scanty intelligence which may be communicated in spite of defectiveness of organs, than have acquired abilities which may be so perilously abused.

Hence, it might not be wholly without some sentiment of apprehension and fear, that the benevolent man would pronounce the word which was to give sight to the blind, or speech to the dumb. It may be that, notwithstanding the flow of pleasurable feelings which would seem necessarily to attend the putting forth a power communicative of such benefit and blessing, he would sigh, with the Ephphatha on his lips, as the thought occurred, that the senses, which he was about to impart, might only prove avenues of evil, and be dedicated to the service of sin. But with Christ, who could read the human heart, and foresee the human life, there could not have been doubtfulness as to the moral issue of the miracle. He must have unerringly known whether the individual before him would be healed in soul as well as body; whether the wonder, of which he was the subject, would lead to faith in the prophet by whom it was wrought; whether the organs, which he was about to obtain, would

be employed on the glorifying, or on the dishonoring, God. And perhaps he foreknew that the man, when healed, would be found amongst his persecutors, and oh, if so, how could he but sigh, sigh deeply and painfully, as he considered what sin had made the human heart, so hard that even miracles would not soften it, nor produce in it love towards a heavenly benefactor? Indeed, indeed, if there were such an exhibition of insensibility and ingratitude present to his mind, well might he sigh. Ah, men and brethren, if there can be sighs in heaven, he must still sigh as he "poureth his benefits" on every one amongst us, benefits which are too often received as mere things of course, benefits which, if not miraculous, are only not so because of their frequency, and which, alas, fail to bind us more devotedly to his service.

Or, if the Redeemer did not know that the man, whom he was about to heal, would join himself to his enemies; if, on the contrary, he knew that he would be of the few who acknowledged him as the Messiah; still he was too well aware, we may believe, of the dangerousness of the faculties which his word would bestow, to bestow them without a sigh. It was language, of which the man was henceforward to be master, the power of speaking and of being spoken with. And Christ could not give this but with a sigh. He knew that the power of speaking was especially the power of sinning; that no member was so difficult of control, and so liable to offend, as the tongue. There are many statements in the Bible, in regard to the importance of speech, the difficulty of regulating our words, and the danger of sinning with our lips. But I know of nothing more emphatic and expressive than this sigh of our Lord, when considered as indicating that what he bestowed, he bestowed with apprehension. As with the tears which Christ wept over Jerusalem, there is more in this sigh than in lengthened and heart-touching speech. The tongue unloosed with a sigh, the sigh of him who had no sin to sigh for, is the most affecting of all testimonies that the tongue cannot be used without peril. It might do more than whole sermons on the guilt of idle words, to make us

watchful in keeping "the door of our lips," were we only to bear in mind this sigh of the Redeemer. Oh, when tempted to the light jest, and, yet more, to the profane allusion—when inclined to employ on what is frivolous, or malicious, or impure, that high faculty which God bestowed that we might make creation vocal with his praise; then, if you cannot recollect any elaborate arguments which establish the special sinfulness of sins of the tongue, at least you might recall the simple narrative before us; and it might tend to make and keep you fearful of misusing and desecrating the power of speech, to remember that your Savior could not impart this power, without betokening his consciousness how perilous it was: "He sighed," before he could bring himself to say to the deaf and dumb man, "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

But we alluded, in an early part of our discourse, to the parabolic character which seems attached to the miracles of our Lord; and, inclining to the belief that there is no miracle recorded in the New Testament, which does not serve to illustrate certain truths in the christian dispensation, we are reluctant to leave the narrative before us without glancing at its typical instruction. And here we need hardly refer to the general fact, that the sicknesses of the soul are analogous to those of the body; or that man, considered as an immortal being, requires healing processes, similar to those required by the lame, the deaf, and the blind. It can scarcely be called a figure of speech, when we describe the soul of a man, not yet renewed by the Spirit of God, as deficient in the powers of hearing, and seeing, and speaking. For the soul must be judged relatively to that higher world of which she was originally the citizen, and her possession of faculties must be determined by testing her ability for the employments and enjoyments of the scene for which she was designed. But who can disguise from himself, that, in spiritual things, he is by nature as deficient in senses and organs, as he would be in earthly, if unable to see, to walk, to hear, to speak, to taste? The un-renewed soul has no eye for the glories of heaven, no feet for running the way



of God's commandments, no ear for the sweet music of the Gospel, no voice for the praises of Christ, no relish for that bread which is "for the life of the world." And forasmuch as it is only through Christ, in his office of Mediator, that those influences are communicated which repair the decayed, or impart the destroyed faculties, we may justly regard our blessed Savior, whilst working miracles on the body, as both teaching what was needful for the soul, and representing himself as its appointed physician. Hence, in Christ's unstopping the ears, and loosening the tongue, of the man that was brought to him as he passed through Decapolis, every one may find the outlines of a symbolical lesson, as to the necessity for a divine operation on our spiritual organs, ere the tidings of redemption can penetrate the soul, and the utterances of thanksgiving be heard in return.

But more may have been represented than this general fact. The man does not seem to have come of himself; and there is no evidence whatsoever that he had faith in Christ's power to heal. Indeed, as we have endeavored to show you, Christ took pains to fix attention on himself as the worker of the miracle, as though to provide for faith following, if it did not precede the cure. The friends or relatives of the deaf and dumb man had faith in our Lord; this faith moved them to solicit a miracle, and was recompensed by its being wrought. And there is great encouragement in every such record of blessings procured through the intercession of friends. When I read of parents or relations leading the dumb to Jesus, and soliciting, in his name, what he could not solicit for himself, I gain assurance that parents or relations may bring children to the regenerating waters of baptism, and entreat on their behalf those gifts of the Spirit, which they are yet too young to entreat for themselves. I thank God for the record of miracles, in whose subjects there was faith; I thank him still more for the record, when the faith was not found in the party that was healed, but in the party who conducted the diseased person to Christ. Oh, we may do much for those whom we love, whilst they are

unable, or even whilst unwilling, to do any thing for themselves. We may bring them to Christ; we may entreat Christ to heal them; and such narratives as that which has been under review, warrant the hope, yea, even the expectation, that, if we ask in faith, the Redeemer will put forth his miraculous power.

But there is yet another significant fact which ought not to be overlooked. Our Lord led the afflicted man aside from the multitude: did he not thereby tell them, who may be visited with any desire for spiritual cure, that it is not in the throng and bustle of the world that they may expect the renewal of their senses and powers? that they should separate themselves from distracting associations, seeing that it is in privacy and retirement that he is ordinarily pleased to work a moral miracle, and reproduce in the soul the lost image of God? He can heal you any where: he can unstop the ear and loosen the tongue whilst you are in the hurry of the crowd, or when you have sought the secrecy of the closet. But he loves the solitude: if you wish him to work a miracle, prove that you wish it by going aside from the multitude, detaching yourselves from a world that "lieth in wickedness," breaking away from the company of his enemies—and then may you hope that he will meet you, and say unto you, with as much of power as of graciousness, "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

Will he say it with a sigh? Indeed, so great is the corruption of our nature, and so vast the disorganization around us, that the portion of a renewed man has often to be described in the words of St. Paul: "Without were fightings, within were fears." To convert, is to consign to a hard conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. And Christ might sigh in speaking the word which gives spiritual health, remembering that he quickens men to the painful and perilous task of crucifying themselves, of offering themselves "a living sacrifice" unto God.

But if "heaviness may endure for a night," "joy cometh in the morning." The victory is sure with Christ for a leader, though the contest be severe. And if it be with a sigh that he pro-



nounces the Ephphatha now—with a sigh, because to be a believer is to be persecuted and afflicted, at war with the world, at war with one's self—it shall be with a smile that he pronounces the Ephphatha hereafter, saying to the everlasting doors, "Be ye opened," that my people may enter my kingdom: "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest."

## SERMON XI.

### THE LATTER RAIN.

"Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain: so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."—Zechariah, 10: 1.

It is not necessary that we inquire whether, as originally delivered, these words included spiritual blessings or were limited to temporal. The former are so frequently illustrated or shadowed out in Scripture by the latter, that we may safely treat the passage as a direction and a promise which have to do generally with prayer, and particularly with prayer for the communication of divine grace. In order, however, to the right understanding of the words, you are to observe that there were two seasons of the year at which rain was peculiarly needed and looked for in Judea. The one was in autumn, at the seed-time; the other was in the spring, when the corn had to be brought to an ear and filled. The rain which fell at the one, is spoken of in Scripture as "the former rain;" that at the other, as "the latter;" and you find the two mentioned together when God would covenant to do great things for his land. Thus, in the Book of Deuteronomy, "If ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain." Thus again, in the prophecy of Jeremiah, "Neither say they in their

heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season; he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of harvest." And once more, in Hosea, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

But the "latter rain" is often mentioned by itself, as though specially needed to the making available the labors of the husbandman. Thus you read in the Book of Job; "They waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain." And Solomon says, in the Book of Proverbs, "In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain." Jeremiah, also, when describing the utter desolation brought by sin upon the land, exclaims; "Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain." The want of this latter rain would evidently be peculiarly distressing; it might not do more towards causing famine than the want of the former; but, occurring at a time when the husbandman had fully done his part, and was expecting to reap the

fruit of his labors, the horrors of dearth would be aggravated through the bitterness of disappointment; and there would, moreover, be less opportunity of providing sustenance from other quarters than if "the former" rain had failed, and thus long notice had been given of an insufficient harvest.

We may find, as we proceed with our discourse, that, in applying the text to spiritual things, great attention should be given to this mention of "the latter rain" rather than of "the former." At present it is sufficient to have pointed out to you the times at which rain ordinarily fell in Judea: you will hence be aware of the importance of the blessing for which the people are directed to ask. We will now, without further preface, enter on the consideration of several great truths which appear derivable from the passage, when taken, in its largest sense, as a direction to prayer. We will not attempt, beforehand, to specify these truths, but rather leave them to open successively as we prosecute our examination. Let us only ask rain of the Lord, let us only entreat the aids and teachings of his Spirit, without which we may not hope to enter thoroughly into the meaning of Scripture, and it may, indeed, be for our profit that we study the direction, "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain;" and that we hearken to the promise, "The Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

Now we shall begin with looking at the direction as having to do literally with the rain, with those showers which descend in due season to water the earth, "that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater." Alas, how difficult is it to keep God in mind as the great First Cause, when there is a mechanism of second causes through which he is pleased to conduct his operations and communicate blessings! If things ordinarily occur in a settled course, we speedily forget that this course is, after all, but the law which God is pleased to prescribe to himself, to be followed only while it shall seem good to his infinite wisdom, and swerved from whensoever he shall think fit to suspend his own laws. If, for example, there be a time of the

year at which rain is accustomed to fall, how readily do we expect rain at that time, just as though there were a certain set of causes, which, working always, and with unvarying regularity, would be sure, at corresponding seasons, to produce corresponding results. Men seem practically to have but little remembrance, that the mainspring of all the mechanism is in the hands of an invisible Creator; that it is not from what goes on in the hidden laboratories of what they call nature that season succeeds season, and shower and sunshine alternate with so much of beautiful and beneficent order, but that the whole arrangement is momentarily dependent on the will and energy of that supreme Being who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." It is needful, we might almost say, that God should occasionally interrupt the ordinary course of things, that he should suspend the laws which he has been pleased to impress on the natural world, if only that he may keep himself from being forgotten, and compel some recognition of his all-pervading influence from those who actually "live in him, and move, and have their being."

But whilst there is this known proneness amongst us to the substituting second causes for the first, whilst we are confessedly so ready to look to the laws and the mechanism of nature, to do for us what can be done only by the direct and immediate agency of God, how important, how instructive, such an injunction as this; "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain!" You are to lay the emphasis on its being "the time of the latter rain," the season, that is, at which rain might be commonly expected; at which, year after year, it had been accustomed to fall, and at which, therefore, a boastful, or rather an infidel philosophy, might have argued that it would continue to fall, in obedience to fixed and immutable laws. If, from some cause or another, there should be want of rain at seasons when it was not usually wanted, when it was not the time for either "the former rain" or "the latter," perhaps this boastful philosophy itself would allow

that there was place or occasion for prayer. We do not, indeed, mean that the philosophy would necessarily assent to the possible usefulness of prayer in the supposed emergence: it is far more likely that it would entrench itself within its maxims as to the fixedness of nature's laws, and the consequent vanity of any expectation that these laws would be interfered with in order to the meeting our wishes or wants. But, at least, philosophy would here confess, that, if the rain fell at all, it would fall not through the working of mere second causes; and that, therefore, though prayer must be practically worthless, as pleading against a firmly-settled ordinance, it was still so far in place as that only the Being, to whom it was addressed, had power to give rain at so unwonted a time. If, however, it be actually "the time of the latter rain," then will a prayer for rain appear to this philosophy utterly unreasonable or preposterous, as if we were not content to leave natural causes to work out their invariable effects; or as if we wanted to make a parade of the power and efficacy of prayer, and therefore directed it to a boon which we knew that we should receive, whether we asked it or not.

But God, on the contrary, says; "Ask ye rain in the time of the latter rain." Oh, what a lesson to us that we reckon not, so to speak, on the seasons; that we presume not to expect any good merely because the time is come round at which, in the ordinary course of his dealings, God has been used to bestow that good. A blessing may have been long and regularly communicated; but we are not to count on the regularity of the communication, as though it proved some immutable law, which must continue to work out the accustomed result: it may be "the time of the latter rain;" the experience of a lengthened course of years may warrant the expectation of rain; and the clouds on the firmament may seem big with the usual supply—but God has yet to issue his command; God has yet to unseal the fountain; and therefore there is still place for prayer, there is still need for prayer: it is "the time of the latter rain," but, on that very account, it is the time also for the

asking of rain. 'To ask it at another time might be asking a miracle, a departure from God's ordinary course, and we cannot be said to have warrant for that. But to ask it at this time, is to ask what we know is according to God's will; and "this," saith St. John, "is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."

Beware, then, of taking for granted that mercies will continue to descend in the order, and at the times, which may have long been observed: there is no such likely way of stopping the supply, as the failing to recognize that the fountain is with God. God describes himself as "a jealous God;" and it must move him to jealousy, whensoever, in any degree, we substitute his instruments for himself, or look to the channel as if it were the spring. The long continuance of a mercy at a particular season may indeed be said to involve a kind of promise—for God has so constituted us that we naturally expect what we have often experienced; and a divine promise is not only that which is registered in the divine word, but that also which is conveyed through the moral constitution received at God's hands. But let it be remembered that a divine promise, so far from proving it unnecessary that we ask, should itself be our great reason for asking. God's promises are the warrants for man's prayers. What God has promised, may be asked for in the perfect confidence "that it is according to his will;" and since the promises are conditional, their fulfilment being made dependent on our seeking, or inquiring for, the covenanted blessings, we may not only be encouraged in our prayers by God's promises, but ought in no degree to reckon on promises, except as we make them foundations for prayers. God may be said to have promised rain "in the time of the latter rain:" but just because it is a time at which rain has been promised, therefore it is a time at which prayer should be made.

And so with every mercy. The recurrence of the time at which God has been used to bestow it, should not make you expect to receive it again without asking, but should make you



ask in the full confidence of receiving. The Sabbath, for example, is a "time of the latter rain:" rain is then used to fall—God's Spirit descends in gracious showers for the refreshment of the church. The time of the administration of christian ordinances is a "time of the latter rain," God commonly using the preaching of his word and the dispensing of his sacraments, to the conveyance of grace to his waiting people. But because these are times "of the latter rain," shall they not also be times for the praying for rain? Oh, never ought your prayers to be so fervent or importunate. You are, as it were, on the top of Carmel; you see the cloud rising out of the sea; but you must not take for granted that there will be "abundance of rain:" God may command the cloud back into the sea, yea, he may be expected to do this, if you do not wrestle with him in prayer. Therefore, on the Sabbath morn, because it is the Sabbath morn, the morning of grace, redouble your prayers for grace; on sacramental opportunities, because they are God's chosen occasions of imparting his Spirit, cry more earnestly than ever for that Spirit. Think not that the favorableness of the season can make the necessity for prayer less, whereas it does but make the encouragement to prayer greater. Substitute not the means of grace for grace, as though, when the former were vouchsafed, the latter would be sure to follow; ah, there may be the clouds and not the showers; and, therefore, remember ye the precept of our text, and "ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain."

Now we have thus endeavored to show you that the circumstance of its being "a time of rain"—whether the natural rain or the spiritual—so far from furnishing a reason why we should not ask for rain, is itself the great argument for our asking; inasmuch as it proves that we have God's promise on our side, and the promise of God is always the warrant, but never the substitute for the prayer of man. But all that has preceded would have been equally appropriate, had "the former rain," not "the latter," been specified in the text: we have simply spoken of the time as being "a time

of rain;" a time at which it is God's ordinary course to communicate a blessing; and we have warned you against expecting that blessing, without asking for it; we have endeavored to prove to you, that your reason for expecting should be your reason also for asking.

Let us not, however, pass without comment the mention of "the latter rain:" when the reference of the prophet is supposed to be to spiritual rain, there are special truths to be gathered from his speaking of "the latter rain" rather than of "the former." We have explained to you that "the latter rain" was that which fell in the spring, and which was instrumental to the bringing the corn into the ear, and filling it; so that, if this rain failed, the husbandman would be disappointed of his harvest, notwithstanding all his previous industry, skill, and anxiety. He was indeed dependent also on "the former rain," that which fell at the seed-time; for the grain would not germinate, and send up the tender shoot, unless the ground were watered by the fertilizing showers. But there would be a yet more bitter disappointment, for there would be the utter loss of much labor, the fruitless expenditure of much effort and hope, if "the latter rain" were withheld; and, consequently, there was even greater reason for his asking rain in "the time of the latter rain" than in that of "the former:" if "the former rain" were withheld, he might make some other use of his capital and enterprise; but if "the latter," his disaster scarce admitted of repair.

Now without endeavoring to trace too narrowly the parallel to this in spiritual things, we may safely say that there is something very affecting and admonitory in the mention of "the latter rain." It is the rain needed for filling the ear, and fitting it for the sickle. Take it metaphorically, and it is the grace needed for ripening the believer, and fitting him for heaven. The former rain may be considered that which fell upon him at his baptism, or, perhaps more accurately, at his conversion, when he set himself, according to the directions of the prophet, to "break up his fallow ground, and sow to himself in righteousness." And he has been enabled, through the continued

influences of the Spirit of God, to bring forth "first the blade, and then the ear," advancing in the christian life, and adorning the doctrine of the Savior. But oh, there is now a danger of his falling into security, of his reckoning too confidently on the harvest, of his concluding that God will certainly complete a work so auspiciously begun, so happily carried on, and that he himself can have nothing to do but leave God to "perfect that which concerneth" him. True, indeed, it is God alone who can complete what God alone commenced; and true also it is, that God is not willing to leave his work unfinished. But he may withhold "the latter rain," after having given "the former," if he see the husbandman presuming on a promise, in place of persevering in prayer. He does not leave the husbandman to ripen the corn, just as he did not require of him to make the seed shoot; for there is not a single stage in the great process of spiritual renewal, at which it is ought else but God's grace, which, acting on the heart, brings out features of the image which sin fearfully defaced. But whilst it is not with the husbandman, but with God, to ripen the corn, God may make his ripening it depend on the exercise of faith, and the importunity of prayer. He may give "the latter rain," if the husbandman, conscious of his dependence upon God for the harvest, continue meekly to supplicate the necessary showers: he may withhold that rain, if the husbandman, calculating on the ordinary course of his dealings, grow remiss in petitioning, and give up his fields to the presumed certainties of the season.

There is no point in the life of a christian, at which he can do without the supply of God's grace; none at which he can expect the supply, if he be not cultivating the spirit and habit of prayer. It is not the mere circumstance of his having long followed the narrow path of life, which can be taken in proof that he will follow it to the end. If he have hitherto walked with God, it has been through his having sought and obtained such communications of the Divine Spirit, as have enabled him to maintain his separation from a world lying in wickedness. And if he is to persevere in walking with God,

it must be through perseverance in these acts of faith and of prayer: if he think himself sure to go on, because he supposes that he has acquired a certain velocity which will suffice, without further effort, to carry him to the end, alas, he shows only that, even in advancing, he has failed to observe by what his progress was caused. That progress can never be such that he may dispense with the assistance, without which he could not have made a successful beginning. There was "the former rain," else there could not have been even the green blade; there must be also "the latter rain," else will he "bring no fruit to perfection." But it is the same thing, it is rain, which is needed at both times, or for both ends: there is no change in the instrumentality; he could not have begun without Divine grace, and Divine grace alone can give completeness to the work.

This is among the simplest, the most elementary of doctrines; and yet it is one of which the believer requires to be often and earnestly reminded. When a man begins in religion, his conviction of sin, and his sense of danger, conspire to the urging him to cry unto God for assistance and guidance. But when he has made some way, there is fear of his forgetting the agency to which alone he is indebted for progress. Or, if he do not forget the agency, he comes to expect it as a matter of course—as the husbandman the rain at the accustomed seasons—and he grows more remiss in prayer for God's Spirit, even whilst relying on the aids of that Spirit. Beware of this, ye who are growing old in a christian profession. Ye are not secure of having more of God's Spirit, merely because ye have already had much. Ye must not slacken in prayer for that Spirit, because it is only "the latter rain" which is now needed, and you may think that God will be sure to ripen what he has so long been cultivating. Rather think with yourselves, how grievous would it be that the harvest should be one of shame, when the seed-time has been one of promise! How sad to miss "the latter rain," after having had "the former," and thus lose the labor of years, when on the point, it may be, of gathering in the sheaves! Oh, pray the more earnestly,



strive the more intensely, the nearer you stand to the termination of your course. I would say to the believer, even on his death-bed, a good hope, a scriptural hope, is that which expresses itself in cries for God's grace. Till you are with God in heaven, no language can be so appropriate as that which entreats that God would be with you on earth. It is indeed "the time of the latter rain;" and those dense clouds, which are the heraldry of dissolution, are commonly charged with showers of consolation; for God may be expected to be doubly with his people, as they pass "through the valley of the shadow of death." But God will still be "inquired of" for what he stands ready to bestow; and the best confidence for the dying, as the best for the living, is confidence in prayer as laying hold on a promise. Be it then "the time of the latter rain"—"the latter rain," because but few more showers can be needed; "the time" of that rain, because, in his ordinary course, God is then wont to give largely of his grace—on neither account slacken in prayer; rather, on both accounts, be fervent in prayer. There is the better reason for expecting an answer to prayer, but none for supposing that prayer is no longer needed: he alone can safely have done with offering prayer for grace, who has begun the anthem of praise in glory; and, therefore, "Be not weary in well-doing," but "ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain."

But now let us consider whether "the time of the latter rain" may not be a season in the history of the church, and whether, when so understood, there is not a great and neglected duty enjoined by the text. It is certainly to be gathered from the tenor of Scripture, that, as "the time of the end" approaches, that time on which prophecy has thrown its most emphatic descriptions, there will be a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Even the prediction of Joel, which St. Peter quotes as having had reference to the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, would seem to be still waiting an ampler accomplishment; for the prophet associates the promised gift of the Spirit with the coming of "the great and terrible day of the Lord," and thus pre-

pare us for not expecting that gift in all its largeness, until the time shall be at hand when Christ is to reappear, and set up visibly his throne on the wreck of all earthly dominion. But, at all events, there is no dispute that the prophecy refers generally to the christian dispensation, and that it assigns, as one of the privileges of that dispensation, a larger measure of spiritual influence. When St. Peter adduces the prediction as that which was to "come to pass in the last days," he undoubtedly applies it to the days in which we live, as well as to those in which he spake: these must be amongst "the last days," whatever the view taken of the prophetic chronology; and therefore are they days to which the great promise belongs, "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh."

Hence the present time is "the time of the latter rain:" the time of "the former rain" was that of earlier and preparatory dispensations, when the world was being made ready for a fuller revelation; but now that the Holy Ghost has entered specially on the office of guide and instructor to the church, it is the time of "the latter rain." There is to be no higher evidence of the truth of christianity, no opening of more direct intercourse between earth and heaven: we are in the enjoyment of those final advantages for securing happiness beyond the grave, which were longed for, but in vain, by them on whom only "the former rain" fell; many prophets and kings having desired to see the things which we see, and not having seen them, and to hear the things which we hear, and not having heard them. But though it is thus "the time of the latter rain," because, generally, that time must include the whole christian dispensation, and because perhaps, in a stricter sense, it must comprehend such days as our own, which are not without signs of the second coming of Christ, yet it does not follow that "the latter rain" will fall; as though the heavens must be opened, merely because it is the season for the showers. Our blessed Savior, when delivering counsels which were undoubtedly to serve for the instruction of the church to "the time of the end," spake thus in regard of the Spirit: "If ye



then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." The dispensation, which he was introducing, was to be emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit; the dispensation throughout which the Spirit was to "abide" as "a Comforter" with the church; and yet, you see, the asking for that Spirit is still made the condition on which it should be given.

It is the same as with prophecies of the restoration of Israel, and with promises of gladness and peace to the long exiled people. Nowhere do you find these prophecies and promises more copiously uttered than in the thirty-sixth chapter of the book of Ezekiel—but then, observe how this chapter concludes, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God had just declared that he would do this and that thing; he had made no conditions, but spoken as of a fixed, irreversible, purpose; and nevertheless, as if to remind us of a condition, which is always involved, if not always expressed, where a Divine promise is passed, he adds that he must yet be "inquired of by the house of Israel," in order to his accomplishing what he had announced.

Thus also with regard to the progress of Messiah's kingdom, the march of christianity towards universal dominion. God hath promised great things. He hath not intended that the vast blessings of redemption should, even in appearance, remain limited to certain sections of the family of man. Though, for wise ends, he hath permitted a long struggle between darkness and light, he has decreed the termination of that struggle, having given assurance of a time when all shall know him "from the least unto the greatest," when "the kingdoms of the world" shall become "the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ." But he will yet be "inquired of" for these things, to do them for us. He requires of us that we exert ourselves for the spread of christianity; and he requires that we treat of him the accomplishment of his gracious declarations. Have we not failed in both particu-

lars? and perhaps even more egregiously in the latter than in the former? Without pausing to examine what proportion our efforts have borne to our means, whether we have, in any due measure, employed our resources on the arduous, but glorious, work of making Christ known to the heathen, let us inquire as to the frequency and intenseness of our prayers for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and shall we not find but too much cause to confess that we have verily been remiss in a duty, which is second to none in urgency, and to none in hopefulness? The prosperity of the church at home, the progress of our holy religion abroad, these are not so much dependent on any external machinery, as on the quickening, renewing, and strengthening influences of the Holy Ghost. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

And these influences of the Holy Ghost are promised in answer to prayer. But do we often make them the subject of prayer? Do we in our closets, do we in our families, cry much unto God that he would fulfil his promises in the bestowment of his Spirit? I do believe, without indulging in exaggerated speech, that we have in our possession the means of overthrowing the idolatries of the world, and erecting the Sanctuary of God on the wreck of the temples of heathenism. But I do not believe this, because of the magnificent, the unequalled, resources which God, in his providence, has given into our keeping. I do not believe this, because it may almost be said of our colonies, that they are planted on every land, and of our fleets, that they cover every sea. Perish the boastful computations which, after drawing out our political and commercial ascendancy, would infer that we must be competent to the covering the earth with the knowledge of Christ. But I believe this, because I believe in the power of the Holy Ghost to renew the face of the world, and in the power of prayer to obtain the operations of that divine agent. I believe this, because I believe that there is a goodly company in our land who pray the prayer of faith, and who have, therefore, only to be diligent in asking "of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain," to

insure the descent of showers which shall cause the waste places to rejoice, and "blossom as the rose." But if the faithful pray not for the rain, it will be nothing, as heretofore it has done little towards evangelizing the globe, that we have national resources for the propagation of truth, such as were never yet committed to any people under heaven. Some inconsiderable province, some state undistinguished in the scale of nations, unendowed, to all appearance, with means for high enterprise, may yet take the lead in the honored work of subduing the kingdoms to the Lord our Redeemer, because it will take the lead in the undoubted duty of beseeching of God to pour out his Spirit. Let us remember and be warned by this. Let each consider, and examine, whether he may not have verily been guilty herein, perhaps never praying, or praying but listlessly and formally, for the promised descent of the Holy Ghost. Our lot is cast in the last days, in "the time of the latter rain." We are not without our signs, in the march of events, in the aspect of society, in the accomplishment of prophecy, that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Now then is the time for earnest, united, importunate prayer for the Spirit of God. Wonders may be accomplished; a nation may be "born in a day;" "the ends of the earth may see the salvation of the Lord;" O "ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest;" "ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain;" and "the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

There is something very beautiful in the terms of this promise; but we have time only for a hasty notice. The "bright clouds," or, as the marginal reading has it, "lightnings," are the harbingers, or forerunners, of the rain; and God, you see, declares that he will make these, before he sends the showers. Thus he exercises faith; he does not immediately answer the prayer, but requires his people still to "wait" on him; he will "make bright clouds" for their encouragement, but they must persevere in supplication if they would have showers for their refreshment. Ay, and to them that "wait upon the

Lord," there may be clouds, but are they not "bright clouds?" the stripes of light are painted on their darkness; the murkiest cloud which can rise on the firmament of the believer has a gilded side: "the Sun of righteousness" shines on it; and so truly is the time of tears the time also of "the latter rain," that, if these "bright clouds" betoken a season of affliction, they are quickly followed by communications of grace. God may bring the cloud over his people, and, as Elihu saith, "Men see not the bright light which is in the clouds;" but if the world see it not, the believer may; and God brings the cloud, that its brightness being acknowledged, in and through the acknowledgment of his doing all things well, he may then send "a gracious rain on his inheritance, and refresh it when it is weary."

And the showers which God sends are for the clothing with richer verdure his garden, which is the church. "To every one grass in the field." We may receive the Spirit; but we do but grieve, we do but quench it, if its influence be not visible on our walk and conversation. If there be not more and brighter grass in the field, we deceive ourselves if we think that there can be more of saving grace in the heart.

But how large is the promise—"To every one grass in the field." Here is evidence that "the time of the latter rain" is especially that "time of the end," when falsehood is at length to give way before truth, and the trials of christianity are to issue in its triumph. "To every one grass in the field,"—all shall know the Lord, all shall be righteous. Blessed and glorious prospect! There may be reason for thinking that the regenerated earth shall be enamelled with the loveliness which sparkled in paradise, ere the dark blight of sin dimmed the lustre; but, at the least, here is a moral verdure of surpassing richness, and I ask not the visions of a material luxuriance, when we have thus the assurance of an universal righteousness. O Spirit of the living God, the parched and stricken earth waits thy descent: come down, in answer to our prayers, that the valleys and mountains may no longer lie waste.

## SERMON XII.

### THE LOWLY ERRAND.

"And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them."—Matt. 21 : 3.

You will all probably remember the portion of our Lord's history with which these words are connected. Christ was about to make his last entry into Jerusalem, where he was to seal his doctrine with his death, and offer himself in sacrifice for the sins of the world. There was a prophecy which had distinctly announced that the Messiah should enter the city "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." That this prophecy might not be unfulfilled, our Lord determined to make his approach to Jerusalem in the manner which Zechariah had indicated.

In order to this, we read that when they "were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me." The remainder of the direction is contained in our text. The thing enjoined on the disciples had all the appearance of an act of robbery; and it might well be expected that they would encounter opposition. But Christ provided against this, telling them what answer to make if any one questioned their right to the ass and the colt, and assuring them that this answer would save them from molestation. And so it came to pass. The disciples went as they had been directed; the ass and colt were found at the precise spot which had been described; the owners interfered to prevent what seemed like the seizure of their property; but the simple words with which Christ had furnished

his messengers removed all objections, and the ass and colt were allowed to depart.

This is one of those occurrences to which we may easily fail to attach due importance, and which contain instruction not to be detected by a cursory glance. The more prominent events in the history of Jesus, the great things which befell him, and the wonderful which he wrought, attract and fix attention; and we perhaps labor to extract from them the lessons with which they are fraught. But minute things we may comparatively overlook, and so lose much which is calculated to strengthen faith or regulate practice. Possibly, there is often as much to admire and imitate, where there is little of show in the outward action and duty, as where the thing done overwhelms us by its magnificence, or that enjoined by its arduousness. Every one stands in amazement by the grave of Lazarus, and looks with awe on the Redeemer as, with a single word, he reanimates the dead. But few may pause to acknowledge equal tokens of superhuman ability, as Christ sends Peter to find a piece of money in the mouth of a fish, or two of his disciples to bring an ass from the neighboring village. Every one admits the greatness of the obedience when Levi abandons the receipt of custom, and the difficulty of the injunction, when the young man is bidden to sell the whole of his possessions. But few, comparatively, may observe how christian obedience was taxed, when apostles were sent on such an errand as is now to be



reviewed, or when the owners of the ass and the colt surrendered them on being told that they were needed by Christ. Let us, then, devote a discourse to the considering an incident which is less likely than many to attract by its evident wonderfulness; but which may be found, on inquiry, to attest most decisively the mission of Christ, and to furnish lessons of the first moment to ourselves.

Now the Evangelist, so soon as he has related how Jesus sent his disciples on the errand in question, remarks: "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," and then proceeds to quote the words of Zechariah. Here the representation undoubtedly is, that Jesus sent for the ass and the colt on purpose that he might accomplish an ancient prediction, which, by universal consent, had respect to the Messiah. An impostor would have done the same. Had a deceiver arisen, professing to be the Christ, he would of course have endeavored to establish a correspondence between himself and the deliverer whom seers had beheld in their visions.\* Wheresoever the thing predicted were such that its seeming accomplishment might be contrived, he would naturally have set himself to the bringing round what should pass for fulfilment. And certainly the prophecy of Zechariah is one which a false Christ might have managed to accomplish. There was nothing easier than to have arranged for entering Jerusalem in the manner indicated by the prophet: any one who pretended to be the Christ, and who knew that the riding into the city on an ass was one appointed sign of the Christ, could have taken care that this sign at least should be his, whatever the particulars in which he might fail to give proof. We do not, then, bring Christ's entering Jerusalem in the manner foretold by Zechariah, as any convincing evidence of the truth of his pretensions: there was, indeed, the accomplishment of a prophecy, but it was a prophecy of which, on the showing of the Evangelist, Jesus himself arranged the accomplishment, and which an impostor might, without difficulty, have equally ful-

filled. It was necessary that the thing predicted should come to pass, otherwise, as you must all see, there would have been a flaw in the credentials of our Lord: for as the riding on the ass into Jerusalem had been distinctly foretold, he could not have been the Christ had he not thus entered the city. Hence the accomplishment of the prophecy in question prevented an objection rather than furnished a proof: it prevented an objection, because the not having ridden into Jerusalem might have been urged in evidence that Jesus could not be the Christ: but it furnished no proof, because a deceiver might have contrived to make his entry as the prophet had announced.

But if we may not dwell on the incident before us as proving Christ divine through the witness of fulfilled prophecy, let us consider whether there be not the witness of more than human prescience and power. And here, again, we must proceed with caution and limitation. For just as there may be contrivance to produce the apparent accomplishment of prophecy, there may be to effect the apparent display of supernatural attributes. There was—at least there may have been, a display of superhuman knowledge and power. Christ told his disciples, with the greatest minuteness, where they should find the animals, and what words would induce the owners to allow their being taken. If you read the accounts in the several Evangelists, you will perceive that he went into the nicest particulars. There was to be an ass tied, and a colt with her. The colt was to be one on which never man had sat. The place was to be immediately on entering the village, and where two ways met. The owners were to make objection, but to withdraw that objection on being told, "The Lord hath need of them." Now, if this were not miracle, the owners having been supernaturally acted on, was it not prophecy? Christ predicted certain occurrences, and when all came to pass as he had said, was there not proof of his being gifted with more than human foresight? Yes; if the whole were not contrived and pre-arranged. And it might have been. What easier than for an impostor and his confederates to have managed the whole affair?

\* See Sermon 3.

The impostor might have agreed with his confederates, that they should be in waiting at a certain place with certain animals, and that, on receiving a certain message, they should surrender those animals. And thus might he have acquired for himself the reputation of a prophet, though there would have been nothing in the whole transaction but trick and collusion.

Let us consider, however, whether the supposition of trick and collusion can be, in any measure, sustained under the circumstances of the case. Had the owners of the ass been confederate with Christ, they must have been of the number of his followers or adherents. But then they would, almost necessarily, have been known to the disciples whom Jesus sent, and thus the whole deception would have been instantly exposed. For you are to observe, that, if any were to be convinced or persuaded by the prescience displayed, it must have been the disciples; no others, so far as we know, were acquainted with what we may call Christ's prediction. But no effect could have been wrought on the disciples, had not the owners of the ass been strangers to Jesus; and, if strangers, they could not have been leagued with him to effect a deceit.

Whilst, therefore, we readily allow that there was that in the things predicted and performed which might have given place for imposture, we contend that the circumstances exclude the supposition of imposture, and leave room for nothing but belief that Christ really prophesied, and that events proved his prophecy truth. And having satisfied ourselves that there could not have been deception or collusion, we may admire the prescience and power displayed, and derive from them fresh witness to the dignity of our Lord. We have pointed out to you how the prophecy descended into the minutest particulars, and it is this accuracy of detail which makes prophecy wonderful. A great occurrence may often be conjectured through human sagacity; a keen observer will mark the shadows thrown by coming events, and give notices of those events, which time shall accurately verify. But the difficulty is to go into trifles, to foreknow things trifling in themselves,

or their trifling accidents and accompaniments. I am really more struck at the foreknowledge of Christ, when sending his disciples for the ass and the colt, than when announcing the desolations which should come upon Jerusalem. Circumstanced as the Jews were in regard of the Romans, subjected to their empire but galled by the yoke, a far-sighted politician might have conjectured the arrival of the time when rebellion would make the eagle swoop down to the slaughter. But that an ass and her foal should be found, at a certain moment, on a certain spot—that the owners would allow them to be taken away on the utterance of certain words, which even a thief might have used—indeed, there may not be as much majesty in such a prophecy, as when the theme is a conqueror's march or an empire's fall, but I know not whether there be not more marvel, if you judge by the room given for a shrewd guess or a sagacious surmise.

There was miracle, moreover, as well as prophecy. I can count it nothing less than a miracle wrought upon mind, that men, in all probability poor men, were willing to give up their property at the bidding of strangers, and with no pledge for its return. You can hardly explain this but on the supposition of a superhuman influence; so that Christ, who had before showed his power over matter at a distance, by healing the centurion's son without going to his house, now showed his power over mind at a distance, by constraining men to act without bringing them to hear. Hence, we can declare the incident before us a singular exhibition of the power of prophecy and the power of miracle; an exhibition, moreover, as appropriate as it was striking. We can suppose that our Redeemer, knowing the bitter trials to which his disciples were about to be exposed, desired to give them some proof of his superhuman endowments, which might encourage them to rely on his protection when he should no longer be visibly amongst them. What shall be the proof? shall he control the tumultuous elements? shall he summon legions of angels? shall he shake Jerusalem with the earthquake? shall he divide the Jordan? Nay, it was not by

any stupendous demonstration that the timid disciples were likely to be assured. They rather required to be taught that the knowledge and power of their Master extended to mean and inconsiderable things; for hence they would learn, that, though poor and despised, they should not be overlooked but engage his protection and care. They wanted evidence that his presence was not needful in order to his guardianship, but that he could act on their enemies as well when at a distance as when near. And the more magnificent miracle might not have certified them on the points on which they thus needed assurance. But this was done by an exhibition of prescience in regard to an animal and of power over its owner. He who could be taking cognizance of the place of an ass and her foal, would not fail to observe the position of the poor fishermen, his followers; he who could influence those who saw him not to surrender their property, would put forth control over persecutors when he had returned to the heavens.

And therefore do we call upon you to admire the transaction under review, not only because it displayed superhuman knowledge and power, but displayed them in the manner best adapted to the circumstances of those for whose benefit it took place. Our blessed Savior repeated the kind of display, as though feeling its special suitableness to his disciples, when he indicated the place for eating the passover, by the meeting a man "bearing a pitcher of water." The ass and the colt might have been procured without all this labored and circuitous process. But Jesus, contemplating the fulfilment of an ancient prediction, would have it fulfilled through such means as should strengthen the faith of the dejected followers, who were soon to be separated from him. He might in a moment, by an act of creative power, have produced the creatures of which he stood in need. Or he might have summoned the chief priests and scribes, and constrained them, however much against their will, to provide for his triumphant, yet humiliating, entry. And in such methods there might have been more that was calculated to dazzle and amaze. But if the despised were to be taught that meanness could

not hide from his notice, and the deserted that distance could not withdraw from his protection, then, indeed, nothing could have been more appropriate than the transaction before us. It might have been a loftier bidding, Go ye to the wilderness and command hither the untamed thing which "scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver;" or, "Go ye to the Sanhedrim, and demand of the haughty assembly that they furnish my humble equipage, and so enable me to fulfil prophecies which shall witness against them;" but there was immeasurably more of regard for the wants of his disciples, more of tender consideration, more of gracious forethought, in the directions before us, "Go ye into the village: ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and say, The Lord hath need of them."

Now, up to this point we have examined the transaction with reference to our Savior, considering only the prescience and power displayed, together with the wisdom and goodness that may be traced in the mode of display. Let us now turn to the conduct of the disciples, and see whether there be not much to deserve our imitation.

It does not appear that there was any hesitation as to the obeying a command which might naturally have been heard with some measure of repugnance. The disciples were to go on what might have passed for a wild errand. Was it likely that they should find the ass and the colt just where Christ said? If they did, how were they to obtain possession? what was it but robbery to attempt to remove them without the knowledge of the owners? and if the owners should be standing by, what could be expected from them but insult and violence? what probability was there that they would be influenced by such words as Christ directed to be used? It can hardly be questioned that most of us would have been ready with these doubts and objections. We invent reasons enough for hesitating, or refusing to obey, when there is not half so much of plausible excuse for avoiding a prescribed path of duty. How difficult do we find it to take God at his word, to show our faith in a pro-



mise by fulfilling its condition! We will not go to the place where the two ways meet, on the simple assurance that we shall there find what we seek; we want some more sensible evidence as to the animals being there, before we adventure on what may only disappoint. And if we are to be exposed to misconstruction or opprobrium, if the thing which we are called upon to do be likely to bring reproach, or give occasion for calumny, what a shrinking is there! what a reluctance! The positive command of Christ would hardly suffice, if it required what an ill-natured world might liken to robbery. Not that, in obeying the Divine law, we shall ever give just cause for opprobrious reflection; the command might be to take the ass and the foal, but God would provide that the taking them should not bring disgrace upon religion. But this it is for which we cannot trust him: we doubt whether there will be any such power in the words, "The Lord hath need of them," as will secure us from violence or malice; and therefore, we either decline the duty altogether, or enter on it with a hesitation, and want of faith, which may themselves produce the results of which we are in dread.

It was not thus with the first disciples; and we should do well to endeavor to imitate their obedience. It seems, with them, to have been enough that the duty was clear, as enjoined by a plain command of their Master; and immediately they "conferred not with flesh and blood," hearkened not to carnal suggestions, but acted as men who knew that compliance was their part, and the removal of difficulties God's. Thus should it be with us; we should have but one object, that of satisfying ourselves, from the prayerful study of Scripture, whether this action be right or that action wrong; when the decision is reached, there should be no hesitation in regard either of consequences or means; what God has made it incumbent on us to do, he will enable us to perform; what he requires us to give up, he will not suffer us to want. If he send us to the place where the two ways meet, it shall be only our faithlessness which can prevent our there finding what we seek; and if his bidding seem to expose us to the

being called robbers, he will see his will so executed as to silence the adversary.

And then it is well worthy of remark that it looked like an ignoble errand on which the disciples were dispatched. When sent to preach the Gospel in the cities of Judea, there was something illustrious in the commission; we can imagine them going forth, sustained in part by the lofty consciousness of being messengers from heaven, charged with tidings of unrivalled importance. But to be sent to a village in quest of an ass and her foal; what an indignity, it might almost have been said, for men on whom had been bestowed supernatural powers, who had been intrusted, not only with the preaching of the Gospel, but with the ability to work wonders in proof of its truth. Probably they were not aware of Christ's reasons for sending them on such an errand; it might have thrown a sort of splendor about the commission, had they known that ancient prophecy was to be thereby accomplished. But it was not until after his resurrection that Christ expounded unto his disciples "in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." It may, therefore, have been that they whom he dispatched, had no idea whatsoever of being instrumental to fulfilling a famous prediction, but went about the business in ignorance of all that might have redeemed it from apparent ignobleness. The opinion of many is, that the two disciples were Peter and John, men who had accompanied the Redeemer to Tabor, and witnessed the wondrous scene of his transfiguration. What a change was here! to have been selected, at one time, to go to meet Moses and Elias, emerging in glory from the invisible world; and at another, to go into a village, and find an ass and her foal for their Master. But it was for their Master; and this sufficed. It mattered nothing to them on what they were employed, provided only it was Christ by whom they were employed. That, they felt, could not be degrading which he commanded; nor that unimportant by which he might be served. Oh for something of the like spirit amongst ourselves—a readiness to fill the lower offices as well as the chief, a disposition to

count it honor enough to be useful to Christ, in whatever capacity! How many are there who can be active and earnest in what is great and imposing, and take the lead in enterprises for the spread of the Gospel, who, nevertheless, have no taste for humbler duties, duties to be discharged in the hovel of poverty, and at the bedside of sickness! This is willingness to be the disciple, whilst Judea has to be traversed, with all the insignia of an ambassador from God, and unwillingness, when the ass and the colt are to be fetched from the village. How many can hearken gladly to religion, whilst discourse turns only on lofty things, on communings with Deity, on manifestations of heaven, who yet feel impatience, and even disgust, when there is mention of a cross to be borne, and reproach to be braved. And what is this but readiness to follow Christ to the mount, when he is about to assume glorious apparel, and shine forth in the majesty which is essentially his own, but refusal to act in his service when he requires the mean animal, which is likely to procure him the scorn of the proud?

Indeed it is a prime truth, but one which we are all slow to learn, that there is no employment which is not ennobled through being employment for Christ, and that it is not genuine christianity which selects what it likes, and leaves what it dislikes. If we have the love of Christ in our hearts, it will be our dominant desire to promote his cause and perform his will; and though the dominance of this desire may not prevent our feeling that we should prefer one sphere of labor to another, or enter with greater alacrity on this course than on that, it will certainly produce readiness for every variety of duty, for fetching the colt on which Christ may ride, as well as for rearing the temple in which he may dwell. And we set before you the example of the Apostles in a particular, in which, possibly, it is often overlooked. We show you how, without the least hesitation, these holy men set themselves to the obeying a command, against which they might have offered very plausible objections, objections drawn not only from the little likelihood of success, but from the almost certain exposure to reproach and disgrace.

We show you also how it was required of them to come down, so to speak, from their loftier occupation, and perform what might be called a menial service; and with what alacrity they complied; the very men to whom spirits were subject, and who had been ordained to wage God's war with the powers of darkness, being directed, and being willing, to go on an errand to which the meanest were equal. The disciples were never worthier of imitation than in this. Think of them when a duty is proposed to you from which you recoil, because there seems but little to encourage, and you must, moreover, be liable to opposition and calumny. Is it apparently a less hopeful thing which you have to take in hand, than the finding so many contingencies satisfied as were to meet, if the two disciples succeeded? the animals of the right kind, standing at a certain place, and at a certain time, the owners consenting to their removal, without receiving price or security. And can the doing what is bidden expose you to more of opposition and calumny than seemed to threaten the disciples, who were to take the property of others, and thus run the risk of being regarded and treated as robbers? Think, moreover, of these disciples when you either long for more honored employment than has been allotted you by God, or are tempted to decline any duty as beneath you, and fitted only for such as are inferior in office. They were, probably, among the mightiest of Apostles who went into a village to loosen, and lead away an ass and her foal, at the bidding of Christ. Ah, it were easy to exhibit the disciples under a more imposing point of view, and you might feel it a stirring thing to be bidden to imitate these first preachers of christianity, as they throw themselves into combat with the idolatries of the world. But the hard thing is to obey Christ on the simple warrant of his word, without objecting the difficulties, or computing the consequences. The hard thing is, to be willing to be as nothing, so long as you may be useful in the church; to be content with the lowest place in the household of the Lord, yea, to think it honor to be vile, if it be indeed in Christ's cause. And wishing

to urge you, by the example of Apostles, to what is hardest in duty, we do not array these men before you in their lofty enterprise of enlightening ignorance, and overthrowing superstition; we remind you who they were, how commissioned, how endowed, and how exalted; and then we bid you ponder their instant obedience to the command, "Go into the village; straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them and bring them unto me."

But if there were much worthy of being admired and imitated in the conduct of the disciples, what are we to say to that of the owners of the ass and the colt? It were beside our purpose to inquire into the circumstances or character of these men. Indeed we have no material for such an inquiry, as we are not told whether they had any knowledge of Christ, and can therefore but conjecture their treatment of his pretensions. Thus much, however, is certain—they opposed the removal of their property, but immediately withdrew their opposition, on hearing the words, "The Lord hath need of them." It may be doubted whether they understood the disciples as referring to Christ under the name of "the Lord," or whether they applied the name to God; for the disciples were not instructed to say, "Our Lord hath need of them"—which would have fixed the message to Christ—but "The Lord," a form of expression which is used absolutely of Deity, as well as of the Mediator. It is not improbable, therefore, that the owners considered that their property was demanded from them in the name of the Almighty, and that, secretly influenced to regard the demand as having actually proceeded from God, they immediately and unhesitatingly complied. At all events, if it were to Christ that they made the surrender, they made it to him under the title of "the Lord"—thus recognizing a right superior to their own, and confessing in him that authority which belongs only to God. So that, in whatever measure these men may have been acquainted with Christ, they clearly acted on the principle of their being stewards rather than proprietors, holding possessions at the will of the Almighty, and prepared to give them up

so soon as he should ask them. It was enough for them to receive an intimation that God had employment for that which he had deposited with them, and instantly they surrendered it, as though no longer their own.

Were they not herein a great example to ourselves? Every one of us is ready to acknowledge in God the universal proprietor, to confess, at least with the mouth, that every good, which is delivered into our keeping, "cometh down from the Father of lights." The infidelity on such points is almost exclusively a practical infidelity: there may be some, but they are few, so blinded by sensuality, or besotted with pride, that they will boldly ascribe to their own skill what they acquire, and speak and think as though there were no ruler above who both has bestowed and may reclaim every tittle of their possessions. It is virtually little more than acknowledging the existence of God, to acknowledge that the universe, in its every department, is subject to the control and disposal of its Maker; that he orders, with absolute authority, the portion of every creature, diminishing or augmenting it, making it permanent or variable, at his own good pleasure. And if the acknowledgment were any thing more than in theory, it would follow that men, conscious of holding their property in trust, would strive to employ it in the service of the actual owner, and be ready to part with it, on his indicating the least wish for its removal. But here, alas, it is that the infidelity comes into action; and men, who are most frank with the confession of not being their own, and of holding nothing which belongs not to another, will be as tenacious of possessions as though there were no superior title; as reluctant to give up any portion, even when God himself asks, as though stewardship implied no accountability.

The owners of the ass and the colt proceeded on the right principle, and should therefore be taken as examples by ourselves. They used the animals for their own pleasure or profit, so long as they were not required by God, but surrendered them, without a moment's hesitation, so soon as they heard "The Lord hath need of them." And this should be the case with every one on



whom God has bestowed earthly wealth. There is nothing to forbid the temperate enjoyment of that wealth—but it is held only in trust; and a due portion should be cheerfully given up, whensoever there is a clear intimation of its being needed by the Lord. Ancient prophecy was to be accomplished. The Redeemer had to make his way into Jerusalem, as the King of Zion, "meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." Here was the need: and he, whose are "the cattle on a thousand hills," and who could have commanded the attendance of swarming troops of the beasts of the field, chose to send to men who had but scanty possessions; and these men, admitting at once his rights, gladly surrendered what they owned at his bidding. Ancient prophecy has yet to be accomplished: the Redeemer has to make his way into districts of the earth which have not bowed at his sceptre, into households and hearts which have closed themselves against him. And though he might command the legions of angels, and cause a miraculous proclamation of his Gospel, it pleases him to work through human instrumentality—not indeed that the instrumentality can be effectual, except through his blessing, but that it is not his course to produce results, save through the use of instituted means. Here then is the need: and it may justly be said, that, through every statement of spiritual destitution, every account how souls are perishing through "lack of knowledge," and how the kingdom of darkness is opposing itself to the kingdom of light, there comes a message to the owners of riches, "The Lord hath need of them."

But who will say that the message ordinarily finds that ready compliance which followed it when delivered by the first disciples of Christ? Indeed, it will be the commencement of a new era in the church, when to show that "the Lord hath need" of this or that thing, shall suffice to procure its cheerful bestowment. Yet assuredly this is the just ground on which to rest every charitable appeal: let it be an appeal in the cause of God and of Christ, and it is not so much a request for liberality as a demand for justice. The Almighty does but ask his own:

you may sin in withholding, but can claim no merit for surrendering. Neither is it exclusively as pointing out the tenure by which we hold our possessions, that there is a lesson in Christ's message to the owners of the ass and the colt. It is a message which should be heard through every afflictive dispensation; for, in one way or another, it may be said that the Lord has need of whatsoever he withdraws from our keeping. If he strip us of property, it may be that we had not made a right use of that property; and, having need of it, he has transferred it to another who will be more faithful in his stewardship. Or, if we be not chargeable with the abuse of our trust, we may be sure that God has taken the earthly riches, in order to attach us more closely to heavenly: and he may be said to have needed what he took, if he took it that he might carry on his great work of moral discipline.

It is thus also with the removal of what we love and miss more than riches—kinsmen, and children, and friends: "The Lord hath need of them." Perhaps they have been fully prepared for the glories of heaven: there were places in the celestial temple which awaited them as occupants; and God, with reverence be it spoken, could no longer spare them from his presence. Oh, there is many a death-bed, over which angels might be thought to whisper the words now before us; and if they who stand round the bed should be tempted to ask, "Why is one so excellent to be taken? why are we to be parted from so rare an example of all that is most precious and beautiful in religion?" the best answer might be, "The Lord hath need of him:" the light which has shone so brilliantly below, is now wanted to add to the radiance above. And even if we may not venture on such a statement as this, we may still say that the dead are taken, that the living may be warned: God breaks our earthly ties, to lead us to the commencing or strengthening friendship with himself; and there can be nothing strained or exaggerated in the saying that "the Lord hath need" of that which he removes, that he may correct and benefit his creatures.

In how many ways then, and through how many voices, is the message syllabled, which Christ sent to them whose property he required. Harken for it, and it will come to you through all the wants of your fellow-men, through the prevalence of ignorance, through the pressure of indigence, through the accidents, sorrows, and bereavements of life. In a thousand ways is God saying to us that he has need of our property, need of our talents, need of our time, need of those whom we love, and of that which we cherish. Shall we refuse him? or, where we have no option, shall we yield up grudgingly, in place of cheerfully, what he requires? Nay, let us take pattern from men to whom probably but little had been intrusted, but who readily gave up that little so soon as it was needed for the service of God. It may be, that we are often inclined to excuse ourselves from imitating scriptural examples, by pleading that the saints of old were of extraordinary character, and in extraordinary circumstances, and cannot therefore with justice be set before us as models. If I hold up the patriarch Job to those on whom sorrow presses hard, and bid them observe how, when children were dead, and possessions destroyed, this man of God meekly said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord"—Yes, is the feeling, if not the answer; but Job was no common man: his name has passed into a proverb: and it is not to be expected that such as we should emulate his marvellous patience. If again, when I would urge men to sacrifices and endurances in the cause of Christ and his Gospel, I dwell on the example of St. Paul, who counted "all things but loss," that he might know and serve the Redeemer, "in journeyings often, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness"—Yes, is the sentiment, if not the expression; but St. Paul has never had his equal; the wonder of his own and every succeeding generation, we may not think to reach so lofty a standard.

Thus there is a way of evading the force of scriptural examples: men imagine circumstances of distinction

between themselves and eminent saints, and give those circumstances in apology for coming far behind them in piety. Let us then learn from the mean and unknown, of whom we may not plead that they were separated from us by any thing rare in endowment or position. Men who are reluctant to part with property, that it may be employed in the cause of God; parents who would withhold their children from missionary work, or murmur at their being transplanted from earth to heaven; sufferers, to whom is allotted one kind or another of afflictive dispensation, and who rebel under the chastisement, as though it were not for good—come ye all, and learn, if not from exalted persons such as Job and St. Paul, yet from the owners of the ass and the colt which Christ sent for, when designing his last entry to Jerusalem. There is virtually the same message to every one of you as was brought to these poor and unknown individuals. The motive to your surrendering what is asked, or bearing what is imposed, is precisely the same as was urged upon them. And they will rise up in the judgment and condemn you, if, with all your superior advantages—the advantages of Christianity above Judaism, of an imperfect over an introductory dispensation—you show yourselves less compliant than they were with a summons from the universal Proprietor. Christ, who knoweth the heart, could reckon on readiness, so soon as the owners should be told of his requiring the ass and the colt. May he reckon on the same with us? Ah, let us, when we go hence, consider what we have which God may speedily require at our hands; let us search, and see whether we are prepared to resign it, when asked for by God—be it wealth, or child, or honor, or friend—and let us observe how reluctance is rebuked now, and will be witnessed against hereafter, by the willingness of the owners of the ass and the colt, of whom Christ could affirm, "Say ye, the Lord hath need of them, and straightway they will send them."

We have thus considered the incidents to which our text has respect, with reference to Christ himself, to his disciples, and to the owners of the ass and the colt. We have endeavored to

show you that our Lord added to the witness for his being the Messiah, by the prescience and power displayed; and that the manner of the display was admirably appropriate to the wants and circumstances of his followers. We have set before you the disciples as worthy of your close imitation, in that they unhesitatingly obeyed where they might have plausibly objected, and were as ready for a menial service as for the most honored and illustrious. And then the owners have been considered, as exemplifying a great principle of which we are apt to lose sight—the principle, that, in the matter of our possessions, we are not proprietors, but stewards, and should therefore hold ourselves ready to part with what we have, so soon as we know that it is needed by the Lord.

They are great lessons, and striking truths, which have thus been derived and illustrated from our text and the context. But, before we conclude, let us dwell for a moment on the vast honor given to humble individuals, in that they were allowed to contribute to the progress of the Savior, when, accomplishing ancient prediction, he advanced towards the city where he was to sacrifice himself. I think, that, if the men saw the triumphal procession, the multitude spreading their garments, strewing the way with branches, and burdening the air with hosannahs, they must have felt an elation of heart, that their beasts should have been chosen for a personage whom thousands thus combined to reverence and honor. The noblest and wealthiest might justly have exulted, had they been allowed to aid the glorious advance: but, as though to show how the mean may serve him, and how their service shall be owned, Christ openly used the property of the poor, on the single occasion when there was any thing like pomp in his earthly career.

And why should we not gather from this, that, when he shall come in power and great majesty—not the lowly man, entering Jerusalem in a triumph which was itself almost humiliation, but the "King of kings, and Lord of lords"—he will acknowledge and exhibit the services rendered him by the poor and despised, as well as those wrought by the great ones of the earth?

It ought to encourage them who have but little in their power, that it was "the foal of an ass" on which Christ rode, and that this foal in all probability, belonged to the poor. We may all do something towards that sublime consummation for which the church watches and prays, when, not from a solitary city, and not from a single and inconstant people, but from ten thousand times ten thousand voices, from every clime, and land, and tongue, shall be heard the shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." "The Lord hath need" of the strength of the mighty and of the feebleness of the weak; of the abundance of the rich and of the mites of the impoverished; and if we will go forth to his help, if each, according to his means and ability, will strive to accelerate the day when "all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest," we may be sure that our labor shall not be forgotten, when "the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him." Oh, if there be some of whom it shall then be told that they contributed the rich and the costly towards preparing the way for the advancing Redeemer, of others it may be said that they had not the rich and the costly to give, but that, with a willing heart, they offered their best, though that best was only the refuse and mean. And we do not merely say that the poorness of the gift shall not cause it to be overlooked: the inconsiderable offering may be shown to have been as instrumental as the magnificent in furthering the progress of the Gospel: he who, when he would accomplish prophecy, entered Jerusalem, not in the rich man's chariot, but on the poor man's ass, may prove that he went forwards to his kingdom, as much through what the feeble wrought in their weakness, as what the mighty effected in their strength.

Let this encourage all, that they be not weary in well-doing. May all make a practical use of the great doctrine of Christ's second coming. Anticipate that coming: realize your own personal share in that coming. He will come "to take account of his servants"—are you ready with your account?



have you improved your talents? have you acted up to your ability in furthering the great cause of truth upon earth? Let none think himself either excused or injured by insignificance. There was, you remember, a servant to whom but one talent had been given; and he was bound hand and foot and cast to "outer darkness," because that one had been hidden, when it might have been put "to the exchangers." There were men who perhaps owned little more than an ass and a colt, but they were ready to surrender what they had, when needed by Christ; and lo, they were honored to the effecting what prophecy had announced in one of its loftiest strains, they were instrumental to the bringing and displaying her King to "the daughter of Zion."

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## SERMON XIII.

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### NEHEMIAH BEFORE ARTAXERXES.

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"I said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it."—Nehemiah, 2: 3, 4, 5.

When the seventy years had expired, during which God, in just judgment for their many offences, had sentenced the Jews to captivity in Babylon, he graciously remembered his promise, and raised them up a deliverer in the person of Cyrus. In the first year of that monarch's reign, "that the word of the Lord, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be accomplished," a royal edict was issued, which not only permitted the captives to return to their own land, but enjoined that every facility should be afforded to their march, and every assistance rendered them in the rebuilding their city and temple.

It does not appear that immediate and general advantage was taken of this edict; the Jews did not rise as one man, under the influence of a desire to resettle themselves in Palestine. And this is little to be wondered at, if you remember the utter desolation in which Jerusalem and Judea then lay, the arduousness and perils of the journey, and the fact that the captivity had continued so long that few, and those only men fast advancing in years, had ever seen the land of their fathers, or were bound to it by the ties of remembrance or acquaintance. No marvel if there was something of pause and hesitation, if piety and patriotism did not instantly nerve all the exiles to abandon the country which had almost become theirs by adoption, and to seek a home where, though they had once been possessors, they would only find themselves strangers. But God purposed the restoration of the people, and therefore, as we read, he raised the spirit of "the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, to go up to build the house of the

Lord which is at Jerusalem." And soon, under the guidance of Zerubbabel, there went forth a mixed company of the old and the young, bearing with them not only their own riches, but "the vessels of the house of the Lord:" obstacles were surmounted, dangers escaped, through the assistance and protection of God; and in due time the wanderers reached the spot, hallowed by so many magnificent recollections, and which was yet to be the scene of mightier things than past days had witnessed.

But the difficulties, as you well remember, of the Jews did not terminate with their arrival in Judea; their city and temple were to be rebuilt; and in this great work, they found inveterate adversaries in the Samaritans, who had been settled in the land by Esarhaddon, and who, professing a mixed and spurious religion, wished not the revival of the pure worship of Jehovah. The opposition of these adversaries was so far successful, that Cyrus, the patron of the Jews, being dead, "the work of the house of God" was made to cease "until the second year of the reign of Darius." Then, however, it recommenced, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah stirred up the people, and God inclined the new monarch to re-enact the decree which had been issued by Cyrus. Under these altered circumstances, Jerusalem had soon again a temple, which, if inferior to that of Solomon in stateliness of structure, and richness of adornment, was yet prophetically declared destined to far higher dignity, inasmuch as it should receive the promised Messiah: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts."

But when the temple had thus risen, and the inspired men were dead whom God had raised up for the instruction and encouragement of the people, there appears to have been great unsettlement in both the civil and ecclesiastical policy of the Jews; as a nation, their position was made precarious by surrounding enemies and internal confusion; whilst, as the people of God, they had mingled themselves with the people of the lands, and

thereby exposed themselves to his wrath. In this crisis, Ezra was raised up, "A ready scribe in the law of Moses:" having obtained sanction and assistance from king Artaxerxes, he visited Jerusalem that he might "teach in Israel statutes and judgments." It would seem to have been almost exclusively to religious matters that Ezra directed his attention; he accomplished a great work in dissolving the unlawful connexions which the Jews had formed with the people of the land; but he did little or nothing towards reinstating his country in the position which it had once held amongst nations. Jerusalem appears to have remained without defences, exposed to the assault of every enemy, and liable at any moment—so ill was it provided with the munitions of war—to be reduced to the ruins from which it had so lately, and as yet so imperfectly, sprung.

Here we come to the actions of another worthy, whose history furnishes the latest canonical records of the Jews till the days of our Lord. When about twelve years had elapsed from the events commemorated in the close of the book of Ezra, we find a Jew, named Nehemiah, residing in Shushan, the capital of Persia, and filling the office of cup-bearer to Artaxerxes the king. His father, Hachaliah, was probably one of them who had declined to take advantage of the decree of Cyrus, preferring to remain where he had made himself a home, to returning to a country where he must feel himself an alien. The son, Nehemiah, occupying a post of great honor in the Persian court, may never have had an opportunity of visiting Jerusalem, but his heart yearned towards the land and city of his fathers; with the spirit of a true patriot, he sought eagerly for information as to the condition of his countrymen, and longed to be instrumental in advancing their prosperity. The information came: Hanani, one of his brethren, and certain men of Judah, reached Shushan from Jerusalem, perhaps disheartened by the difficulties which they had experienced, and accounting it better to resettle in the land in which they had been captives. They gave Nehemiah a melancholy, though not, as it would

seem, an exaggerated account. "The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire."

And now it was that the man of piety appeared in the man of patriotism; and admirably does Nehemiah stand forth as an example to them who profess to have at heart their country's good, and to be stricken by its calamities. He did not immediately call a meeting of the Jews, to consult what might be done for their afflicted countrymen. He did not gather round him a knot of politicians, that plans might be discussed, and assistance levied. But, as one who knew in calamity the offspring of sin, and in the Almighty the single patron of the distressed, Nehemiah "sat down, and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven."

But Nehemiah did not count his part done when he had thus, in all humility, confessed the sins of his nation, and entreated the interference of God. He was not one of them who substitute prayer for endeavor, though he would not make an endeavor until he had prepared himself by prayer. Fortified through humiliation and supplication, he now sought to take advantage of his position with the king, and, true patriot as he was, to render that position useful to his countrymen. Nearly four months elapsed from his interview with Hanani, before an opportunity occurred for his addressing Artaxerxes. There was probably a rotation in the office of cup-bearer, which obliged him to await his turn; and it was at the hazard of life to any one to enter, unbidden, into the presence of the Persian monarch. But in the month of Nisan he stood before Artaxerxes, and he "took up the wine, and gave it unto the king." He was now, however, heavy at heart, and the handing the sparkling draught to the monarch at his banquet, ill assorted with a mind distracted and sad. He had not the skill, indeed he could not have had the wish, to disguise his feelings, and affect a cheerfulness which he did not experience. It was

his object to attract the attention of the king; to do this he had only to allow his countenance to betray what, perhaps, he could hardly have forced it to conceal—for we are expressly told that he had never "beforetime been sad in his presence"—so that the altered demeanor was immediately observed, and its reason demanded with all the quickness of eastern suspicion.

And here it is that we reach the very simple, but touching, narration of our text. Nehemiah was sore afraid, when Artaxerxes, struck with the sorrow depicted on his features, imperiously asked the cause of the too evident grief. It was the moment for which he had wished, yea, for which he had prayed, yet, now that it had come, he felt so deeply what consequences hung upon a word, that he was almost unmanned, and could scarce venture to unburden his heart. He spake, however, and, first offering the customary wish on behalf of the king, asked how he could be other than sad, whilst the city, and the place of the sepulchres of his fathers, lay desolate and waste, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire? Upon this, Artaxerxes demanded what request he had to make; and Nehemiah, though his answer had of course to be immediately given, gave it not till he had strengthened himself by silent petition to one greater than the king; he "prayed to the God of heaven," and then entreated permission to go unto Judah, and build up the city of the sepulchres of his fathers.

The request was successful, though the passage, which we have selected as our subject of discourse, does not require us to refer to subsequent events in the history of Nehemiah. There is enough in this passage itself to require and repay the most serious attention; and we have but engaged you with a somewhat lengthened review of foregoing circumstances, that you might the better appreciate what is here recorded of the conduct of Nehemiah. The two prominent facts on which we wish to seize, do indeed widely differ the one from the other, so that, in making them the subject of a single discourse, we cannot hope to preserve that continuousness of thought which



is generally to be desired in addresses from the pulpit. But forasmuch as the facts come together in Scripture, it must be every way right that they be gathered, as we now propose, into one and the same sermon. The facts are these; the first, that it was as the city of his fathers' sepulchres that Jerusalem excited the solicitude of Nehemiah; the second, that Nehemiah found a moment before answering the king, to offer petition to the Almighty. Let us have your close attention to these very interesting, though unconnected topics; our first topic is, the peculiar plea which Nehemiah urges with Artaxerxes; our second, the ejaculatory prayer which went up from Nehemiah to God.

Now Jerusalem had not yet received its most illustrious distinction, forasmuch as "the fulness of time" had not arrived, and, therefore, there had not yet been transacted within her circuits the wondrous scenes of the redemption of the world. She was reserved for more stupendous and startling things than past days had witnessed, fraught though her history had been with miracles and prodigy: her streets were to be trodden by the incarnate God, and on the summit of Moriah was the promised seed of the woman, bruised himself in the heel, to accomplish the first prophecy, and bruise the serpent's head. Nevertheless, to every man, especially to a devout Jew, there were already reasons in abundance why thought should turn to Jerusalem, and centre there as on a place of peculiar sanctity and interest. There, had a temple been reared, "magnificent" beyond what earth beforetime had seen, rich with the marble and the gold, but richer in the visible tokens of the presence of the universal Lord. There had sacrifices been continually offered, whose efficacy was manifest even to them who discerned not their typical import, forasmuch as at times they prevailed to the arrest of temporal visitations, and pestilence was dispersed by the smoke of the oblation. There, had monarchs reigned of singular and wide-spread renown; the fame of one, at least, had gone out to the ends of the earth, and nations had flocked to hear the wisdom which fell from his lips. There, had been

enacted a long series of judgments and deliverances; the chastisements of heaven following so visibly upon wickedness, and its protection on repentance, that the most casual beholder might have certified himself that the supreme Being held the reins of government, and was carrying out the laws of a rigid retribution.

Hence, it might easily have been accounted for why Nehemiah should have looked with thrilling interest to Jerusalem, even if you had kept out of sight his close connexion with those who were striving to reinstate it in strength, and had not supposed any travelling onwards of his mind to the wonders with which prophecy yet peopled its walls. But the observable thing is, that Nehemiah fixes not on any of these obvious reasons, when he would explain, or account for, his interest in Jerusalem. He describes the city; but he describes it only as "the place of his fathers' sepulchres:" and this he insists upon, as of itself sufficient to justify his urgency, pleading it alike when he would explain why his countenance was sad, and when he stated to the king the favor which he sought at his hands. Before he offered his silent prayer to God, and afterwards, when he might be supposed to have received fresh wisdom from above, he spake, you observe, of the city merely as of the place of the sepulchres of his fathers, as though no stronger reason could be given why he should wish to rebuild it; none, at least, whose force was more felt by himself, or more likely to be confessed by the king. The language of Nehemiah is too express and too personal, to allow of our supposing that he adopted it merely from thinking that it would prevail with Artaxerxes: if there were truthfulness in this worthy, it was the desecration of his fathers' sepulchres which chiefly disquieted him; it was the wish of restoring these sepulchres which mainly urged to his visiting Jerusalem. Ponder these facts for a few moments; they are full, we think, of beauty and interest.

If we may argue from the expressions of Nehemiah, then, it is a melancholy sight—that of a ruined town, a shattered navy, or a country laid waste

by famine and war; but there is a more melancholy sight still, that of a churchyard, where sleeps the dust of our kindred, desecrated and destroyed, whether by violence or neglect. You know, that if poetry or fiction would place its hero in a position to draw upon himself the pity and sympathy of the reader, there is nothing in which it more delights than in the bringing him, after long wanderings as an exile, to the scenes where his childhood was passed, and making him there find the home of his ancestry deserted and ruined. And as the lonely man makes painfully his way through the scene of desolation, the wild winds syllabing, as it would seem, the names of other days, there is felt to be a depth and sacredness in his misfortunes, which must insure his being the object of a more than common compassion.

But, according to Nehemiah, there is another position which is yet more deserving of sympathy. Let us suppose a man to have paid the last sad offices to parents whom he justly revered; he has laid them in a decent grave, and, with filial piety, erected a simple monument over their remains. And then he has gone to distant lands, and worn away many years in separation from all kinsmen, though not without frequent turnings of the heart to the home of young days. At length he revisits his native shore, and finds, as in such cases is commonly found, that of the many friends whom he had left, scarcely one remains to welcome him back. Disappointed at not being known by the living, he seeks the companionship of the dead; he hastens to the village churchyard where his parents sleep; they will speak to him from the grave, and he shall no longer seem lonely. But he can hardly find the grave; the monuments are levelled; with difficulty can he assure himself that the tombs themselves have not been profaned, and the bones of the dead sacrilegiously disturbed. Oh, will not this be the most heartbreaking thing of all? There is something so ungenerous in forgetfulness or contempt of the dead—they cannot speak for themselves; they so seem, in dying, to bequeath their dust to survivors, as though they would give affection something to cherish, and some kind office

still to perform; that, from graves wantonly neglected or invaded, there might always appear to issue the pathetic complaint, "We have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against us."

And we cannot but think that the feelings of the man whom we have thus carried, not to the ruined mansion, but to the ruined mausoleum of his ancestry, would be a full explanation why Nehemiah laid such emphasis on the fact which he selected, when he sought to move Artaxerxes; why he omitted all reference to Jerusalem in its magnificence, to the thrones of monarchs, the schools of prophets, the altars of sacrifice; and simply said, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?"

We do not, however, suppose that the strong marks of respect for the dead, which occur so frequently in the Bible, are to be thoroughly accounted for by the workings of human feelings and affections. We must have recourse to the great doctrine of the resurrection of the body, if we would fully understand why the dying Joseph "gave commandment concerning his bones," and Nehemiah offered no description of Jerusalem, but that it was the place of the sepulchres of his fathers. And there is no need here for entering into any inquiry as to the degree of acquaintance with the doctrine of the resurrection which was possessed under the old dispensation. If you find language used which cannot be adequately interpreted but by supposing a knowledge of the body's resurrection, it must rather become us to infer that men were then informed of this truth, than to conclude, on any other grounds, that it was altogether hidden.

But when you bring into the account the doctrine of the resurrection, it is no longer merely as a man of strong natural feelings, but as an ardent believer in the loftiest truths, that the supposed visiter to the desecrated churchyard might be confounded and overcome. The doctrine of the resurrection throws, as you must all admit, a sacredness round the remains of the dead, because it proves, that, though we have committed the body to the



ground, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," that body is reserved for noble allotments, destined to reappear in a loftier scene, and discharge more glorious functions. It were a light spirit which should not be overawed amid the ruins of a temple, which should recognize nothing solemn in the mouldering piles which it knew to have once canopied the more immediate presence of God; especially if it further knew, that, on some approaching day, the ruins would be reinstated in symmetry and strength, forming again a structure whose walls should be instinct with Deity, and from whose recesses, as from awful shrines, should issue the voice of the Eternal. The dead body is that fallen temple: consecrated upon earth as the habitation of the Holy Ghost, it decays only that it may be more gloriously rebuilt, and that God may dwell in it for ever above. Therefore is it no slight impiety to show contempt or neglect of the dead. It is contempt or neglect of a sanctuary; and how can this be shown but with contempt or neglect of the Being to whom it is devoted?

And there is yet more to be said; the doctrine of the resurrection is the crowning doctrine of revelation; Christ was "raised again for our justification;" "if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." He, therefore, who would forget, make light of, or deny the doctrine of the resurrection, sets himself against no solitary article of the faith; it is christianity in its integrity which is at stake; it is all that is comforting, all that is saving in its tenets, which is displaced or disputed. He, on the other hand, who is earnest in defence of the doctrine of the resurrection, and eager to show that he values it as well as believes, does not, therefore, confine himself to a single truth of our holy religion: the sufficiency of the atonement, the completeness of redemption, the pardon of every sin, the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers, these he sees written, as they nowhere else are, in that general emptying of the sepulchres which he is taught to anticipate—these are preached to him most convincingly by the trumpet of

the archangel, whose peal already falls on the watchful ear of faith. Then the well-kept churchyard, with its various monuments, each inscribed with lines not more laudatory of the past than hopeful of the future, what is it but the public testimony to all that is precious in christianity, forasmuch as it is the public testimony that the dead shall live again? Whereas, if tablets be defaced, graves desecrated, and the solemn enclosure surrendered to insult and neglect, it is not merely that the dead are dishonored, and that violence is thus done to the best feelings of our nature; it is that great slight is thrown on all which, as immortal beings, we are most bound to hold dear, a great acknowledgment apparently withdrawn of truths without which "we are of all men most miserable." It is easy and specious to enlarge on the folly of paying honor to the prey of the worm, conveying with so much parade to the grave that which is turning into a mass of corruption, and then, perhaps, erecting a stately cenotaph to perpetuate the name of a certain portion of dust. And satire may readily point bitter and caustic lines, as the corpse of the owner of princely estates is borne along to the ancient mausoleum, in all the gloomy magnificence which distinguishes the obsequies of the great; and ask, with a sort of cutting severity, whether it be not almost like upbraiding the dead, to pour this stern gorgeousness round the most humbling of earthly transactions? But we have no sympathy whatsoever with this common feeling, that there should be nothing of solemn pomp in consigning the human body to the grave. We might have, if we knew nothing of a resurrection. But not whilst we believe in the general Easter of this creation. Not whilst we believe that the grave is but a temporary habitation, and that what is "sown a natural body" is to be "raised a spiritual." The funeral procession attests, and does homage to, the doctrine of the resurrection. It is not in honor of the body as mouldering into dust that we would have decent rites, or even, where consistent with rank, a sumptuous ceremonial attending its interment; but in honor of the body as destined to come forth gloriously and indissolubly recon-



structed. We have no affection for the proud monument, if it were only to mark where the foul worm has banqueted; but we look with pleasure on the towering marble, as indicating a spot where "the trump of God" shall cause a sudden and mysterious stir, and Christ win a triumph as "the Resurrection and the life."

Then suppose Nehemiah acquainted, as we are, with the doctrine of the resurrection, and we do but find in the emphasis laid upon the fact, that Jerusalem was the place of his fathers' sepulchres, the testimony of his belief in the truths of redemption, and of his desire to make and keep those truths known to the world. "I cannot bear," he seems to say, "that my fathers, who once witnessed from their graves to the most illustrious of facts, should be silent in the dust. I long to give again a thrilling voice to their remains: I would people their cemeteries with heralds of futurity. I may well be downcast when I think of their monuments as levelled with the earth; not because I ostentatiously desire that proud marbles may certify the greatness of my parentage, but because I would fain that men should thence draw evidence of general judgment and eternal life. I mourn not so much that Jerusalem has ceased to be a queen among cities; I long not so much that she should rise from her ashes, to be again imperial in beauty: I mourn that her desecrated graves speak no longer of a resurrection; I long that, through respect for the dead, she may be again God's witness of the coming immortality. Oh, why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste? If thy servant have found favor in thy sight, O king, send me unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it."

Now it is a wholly different, but not a less interesting subject, to which we have to give the remainder of our discourse. We are now to detach our minds from Nehemiah pleading for his fathers' sepulchres, and fix them upon Nehemiah addressing himself to God in ejaculatory prayer. It is among the most remarkable statements of the Bible, "So I prayed to the God of heaven," coming, as it does, between the question of the king, "For what dost

thou make request?" and the answer of Nehemiah, "That thou wouldest send me unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres." There is no interval of time: Nehemiah has had no opportunity of retiring, that he might present supplications to God. He has not knelt down—he has given no outward sign, unless perhaps a momentary uplifting of the eye, of holding communion with an invisible being; and nevertheless, there, in the midst of that thronged and brilliant court, and in the seconds that might elapse between a question and its answer, he has prayed unto God for direction and strength, and received, as we may believe, assistance from heaven. No one can well doubt what it was for which Nehemiah prayed: it may justly be supposed to have been, that God would aid him in preferring his request, and dispose Artaxerxes to grant it. And when you observe that the request appears to have been at once successful—for it pleased the king to send Nehemiah, and to grant him royal letters, which might facilitate the repairs of Jerusalem—you must allow that prayer was not only offered, but answered, in the moment which seemed too brief for all but a thought.

Under how practical and comforting a point of view does this place the truth of the omnipresence of God. It is a high mystery, one which quickly bewilders the understanding, and wears even the imagination, that of God being every where present, incapable, from his nature, of leaving this place and passing to that, but always and equally occupying every spot in immensity, so as never to be nearer to us, and never further from us, continually at our side, and yet continually at the side of every other being in the measureless universe. Yet, with all its mysteriousness, this is no merely sublime but barren speculation, no subject to exercise the mind rather than benefit the heart. It should minister wondrously to our comfort, to know that, whether we can explain it or not, we are always, so to speak, in contact with God; so that in the crowd and in the solitude, in the retirement of the closet, the bustle of business, and the privacies of home, by day and by night, he is alike close at hand, near enough for every whisper, and plente-

ous enough for every want. It is not so with a human patron or friend, who, whatever be his power, and his desire to use it on our behalf, cannot always be with us, to observe each necessity, and appoint each supply. We have to seek out this friend or patron, when we require his help: probably he is distant from us when the most needed; and we have to send a message, which brings no reply till the season have passed when it might be of avail. How different with God! in less time than I can count, the desire of my heart may be transmitted to this invisible Guardian and Guide, find gracious audience, and bring down upon me the blessing which I need.

If there be opportunity, then truly it may become me to seek audience with greater and more palpable solemnity, prostrating myself reverently before him, as the all-glorious King, and giving devout expression to my wishes and wants. But it is not indispensable to the audience, that there should be this outward prostration, and this set supplication. The heart has but to breathe its desire, and God is acquainted with it so soon as formed, and may grant it, if he will, before the tongue could have given it utterance. O that there were in us more of that habit of prayer, which, as with Nehemiah, would not suffer us to make request to man, without first sending up a silent petition to God. When Scripture speaks of praying "without ceasing," and of "continuing instant in prayer," it is generally thought to prescribe what cannot be actually done, at least not by them who are necessarily much occupied with temporal concerns. And if there were no prayer but those most solemn and stated acts, when, whether in private, or in the public assembly, we set ourselves specifically to the spreading our wants before our Father in heaven, these expressions of Holy Writ would have to be interpreted with certain restrictions, or would belong in their fulness to such only as might abstract themselves altogether from the world. But forasmuch as God is always so ready and able to hear that ejaculatory prayer, the sudden utterance of the heart, when there is no place for the bending of the knee, and no time even for the motion of the

lip, may obtain instant audience and answer, what is to prevent there being that devotional habit which shall fulfil the injunction of praying "without ceasing," even though, as with numbers of our race, there be but few moments in the day which, snatched from necessary toil, can be professedly consecrated to communion with heaven?

You have heard of, and are acquainted with, public prayer, and private prayer, and family prayer: but the prayer of which we now speak, ejaculatory prayer, differs from all these. As the name denotes, the heart should be as a bow, kept always strung, ready at any moment to launch prayer as an arrow; a dart which, if small, may yet go faster and further than the weightier implement of more labored attempt. The man of business, he need not enter on a single undertaking without prayer; the mariner, he need not unfurl a sail without prayer; the traveller, he need not face a danger without prayer; the statesman, he need not engage in a debate without prayer; the invalid, he need not try a remedy without prayer; the accused, he need not meet an accuser without prayer. Is it that all and each of these must make a clear scene, ask time for retirement, and be left for a season alone with the Almighty? That were impossible: as with Nehemiah, what is to be done must be done on the moment, and in the presence of fellow-men. And it may be done. Blessed be God for this privilege of ejaculatory prayer, of silent, secret, instantaneous petition! We may live at the foot of the mercy-seat, and yet be immersed in merchandise, engrossed with occupation, or pursued by a crowd. We may hallow and enlighten every thing by prayer, though we seem, and are engaged from morning to night with secular business, and thronged by eager adherents. We cannot be in a difficulty for which we have not time to ask guidance, in a peril so sudden that we cannot find a guardian, in a spot so remote that we may not people it with supporters. Thought, whose rapid flight distances itself, moves but half as quick as prayer: earth to heaven, and heaven again to earth, the petition and the answer, both are finished in that indivisible instant which suffices for the mind's passage through

infinite space. O that you may not neglect the privilege, that you may cultivate the habit, of ejaculatory prayer! and that you may, meditate on the example of Nehemiah. If I would incite you to habits of private devotion, I might show you Daniel in his chamber, "kneeling upon his knees three times a day." If I would commend to you the public gatherings of the church, I might remind you of what David has said, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." If I would inculcate the duty of family prayer, I might turn attention to Philemon, and "the church in his house." But, wishing to make you carry, as it were, the altar about with you—the fire ever burning, the censer ever ready,—wishing that you may resolve nothing, attempt nothing, face nothing, without prayer to God for his ever-mighty grace, I give you for a pattern Nehemiah—who, asked by Artaxerxes for what he made request, tells you, "So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king, Send me unto Judah, the city of the sepulchres of my fathers."

There is nothing that we need add in the way of concluding exhortation. The latter part, at least, of our subject

has been so eminently practical, that we should fear to weaken the impression by repetition. Only, if there be any thing sacred and touching in the sepulchres of our fathers; if the spot, where those dear to us sleep, seem haunted by their memory, so that it were like forgetting or insulting them to suffer it to be defiled, let us remember that the best monument we can rear to the righteous is our copy of their excellence—not the record of their virtues graven on the marble or on the brass, but their example repeated in our actions and habits. If with Nehemiah we would show respect to the dead, with Nehemiah let us strive to be useful to the living. Then, when sepulchres shall crumble, not through human neglect, but because the Almighty bids them give back their prey, we may hope to meet our fathers in the triumph and the gloriousness of immortality. Our countenances shall not be sad, though "the place of their sepulchres lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire," even with the last tremendous conflagration; we shall exult in knowing that they and we "have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

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## SERMON XIV.

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### JABEZ.\*

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"And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."—1 Chron. 4: 9, 10.

If we had to fix on a portion of Scripture which might be removed from our

Bibles without being much missed, we should probably select the first nine chapters of this first Book of Chronicles. A mere record of names, a catalogue of genealogies; the eye glances

\* This Sermon was preached on New Year's day, and a collection was afterwards made in aid of a District Visiting Society.



rapidly over them, and we are inclined to hasten on to parts which may present something more interesting and instructive. Yet what a startling, what an impressive thing, should be a record of names, a catalogue of genealogies! the chapters deserve the closest attention, even if you keep out of sight their bearing on the descent and parentage of the Christ. It is a New Year's day sermon, this long list of fathers and their children. What are all these names which fill page after page? The names of beings who were once as warm with life as ourselves; who moved upon the earth as we move now; who had their joys, their sorrows, their hopes, their fears, their projects; who thought, perhaps, as little of death as many of us, but who were sooner or later cut down, even as all now present shall be. They are the names of those who once lived; nay, they are names of those who still live; and this is perhaps even the harder to realize of the two. The dead are not dead; they have but changed their place of sojourn. The mighty catalogue, which it wears us to look at, is not a mere register of those who have been, of trees of the forest which, having flourished their appointed time, have withered or been cut down; it is a register of existing, intelligent, sentient creatures; not one who has been inscribed on the scroll which, headed by Adam, looks like a leaf from the volume of eternity, has ever passed into nothingness: written amongst the living, he was written amongst the immortal; earth might receive his dust, but his spirit, which is more nearly himself, has never known even a suspension of being: thousands of years ago the man was; at this moment the man is; thousands of years to come the man shall be.

We repeat it—there is something very hard to realize in this fact, that all who have ever lived are still alive.\* We talk of an over-peopled country, even of an over-peopled globe—where and what, then, is the territory into which generation after generation has been swept, the home of the un-

told myriads, the rich, the poor, the mighty, the mean, the old, the young, the righteous, the wicked, who, having once been reckoned amongst men, must everlastingly remain inscribed in the chronicles of the race; inscribed in them, not as beings which have been, but as beings which are? We have all heard of the dissolute man, said to have been converted through hearing the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis, in which mention is made of the long lives of Adam, Seth, Enos, Methuselah, and others, and each notice is concluded with the words, "and he died." It came appallingly home to the dissolute man, that the most protracted life must end at last in death; he could not get rid of the fact that life had to terminate, and he found no peace till he had provided that it might terminate well. But suppose that each notice had been concluded, as it might have been, with the words, "and he lives," would there not have been as much, would there not have been more to startle and seize upon the dissolute man? "He died," does not necessarily involve a state of retribution; "he lives," crowds the future with images of judgment and recompense. You hear men often say, in regard of something which has happened, something which they have lost, something which they have done, or something which they have suffered, "Oh, it will be all the same a hundred years hence!" All the same a hundred years hence! far enough from that. They speak as if they should certainly be dead a hundred years hence, and as if, therefore, it would then necessarily have become unimportant what turn or course events may have taken. Whereas, they will be as truly alive a hundred years hence as they are now; and it will not be the same a hundred years hence whether this thing happened or that, this action were performed or that. For there is nothing so trivial but that it may affect man's future being: in the moral world, as in the physical, "no motion impressed by natural causes, or by human agency, is ever obliterated;"\* of what,

\* This fact is excellently treated in a striking sermon by Mr. Newman, on "the Individuality of the Soul."

\* Babbage, the ninth Bridgewater Treatise.—  
"What a strange chaos is this wide atmosphere we breathe! Every atom, impressed with good and with ill, retains at once the motions which

then, dare we affirm, that, let it be as it may, it will be all the same a hundred, or a thousand, or a million years hence ?

We recur, then, to what gave rise to these remarks ; the long lists of names which occupy the first nine chapters of this First Book of Chronicles. We affirm of these lists, that, without any comment, they furnish a most appropriate sermon for New Year's day. Names of the dead, and yet names of the living, how should their mere enumeration suggest the thought of our days upon earth being as a shadow, and yet of those days being days of probation for an everlasting existence ! And what thought is so fitted to New Year's day, when, as we commence one of the great divisions of time, the very season might seem to speak of the rapid flight of life, and of the consequent duty of attempting forthwith preparation for the future ? To read these chapters of the Chronicles, is like entering a vast cemetery where sleep the dead of many generations. But a cemetery is the place for a New Year's day meditation, seeing that we have just consigned the old year to the grave, with its joys, its sorrows, its plans, its events, its mercies, its sins. And are they dead, the multitudes whose names are inscribed on the gloomy walls and crowded stones of the cemetery, Gomer, and Javan, and Tubal, and Nahor ? Nay, not so : their dust indeed is beneath our feet, but

even that dust shall live again ; and all the while their spirits, conscious still, sentient still, occupy some unknown region, miserable or happy beyond what they ever were upon earth, though reserved for yet more of wretchedness or gladness at an approaching resurrection and general judgment. Neither is the past year dead : not a moment of it but lives and breathes, not one of its buried occurrences that has not a present existence, exercising some measure of influence over our actual condition, and reserved to exercise a yet stronger, when it shall come forth as a witness at the last dread assize, bearing testimony which must help to determine whether we are to be for ever with the Lord, or banished for ever from the light of his presence. Thus these registered names might themselves serve as an appropriate sermon. God is witness that it is in perfect sincerity, and with every sentiment of christian affection, that, adopting the customary language, I wish you all a happy new year. But I must give a voice to the old year. It must speak to you from its sepulchre. No burying of the past as though it were never to revive. No reading of names in the Chronicles as though they were names of those who have altogether ceased to be. Oh, I wish you a happy new year ; but happy it shall not, cannot be, in any such sense as befits beings of such origin, such capacity, such destiny as yourselves, unless you bear diligently in mind that you are mortal, yet cannot die ; that things may be past, yet cannot perish ; that days may be forgotten, but never can forget.

We should receive, however, a wrong impression in regard of these chapters of the First Book of Chronicles, were we to suppose them valuable only on such accounts as have already been indicated. They are not a mere record of names, though, on a cursory glance, we might conclude that they contained nothing else, and that therefore, after one or two general reflections, we might safely proceed to more instructive portions of Scripture. Interspersed with the names, there occur, here and there, brief, but pregnant, notices of persons and things, as though inserted to reward the diligent student, who, in place of taking

philosophers and sages have imparted to it, mixed and combined in ten thousand ways with all that is worthless and base. The air itself is one vast library, on whose pages are for ever written all that man has ever said, or ever whispered. There, in their mutable but unerring characters, mixed with the earliest as well as the latest sighs of mortality, stand for ever recorded, vows unredeemed, promises unfulfilled, perpetuating, in the united movements of each particle, the testimony of man's changeful will.

"If the Almighty stamped on the brow of the earliest murderer the indelible and visible mark of his guilt, he has also established laws by which every succeeding criminal is not less irrevocably chained to the testimony of his crime ; for every atom of his mortal frame, through whatever changes its severed particles may migrate, will still retain, adhering to it through every combination, some movement derived from that very muscular effort by which the crime itself was perpetrated."—Chapter ix. "On the Permanent Impression of our Words and Actions on the Globe we inhabit."



for granted that a catalogue of names could not be worth reading, should go through it with all care, fearing to miss some word of information or admonition.

Our text is a remarkable case in point. Here is a chapter which seems made up of genealogies and names. Let me skip it, might be the feeling of the reader; what good can I get from learning that "Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah?" But if he were to skip it he would miss one of the most beautiful and interesting passages in the Bible, for such, we think to show you, is a just description of our text. We know nothing whatsoever of the Jabez here commemorated beyond what we find in these two verses. But this is enough to mark him out as worthy, in no ordinary degree, of being admired and imitated. There is a depth, and a comprehensiveness, in the registered prayer of this unknown individual—unknown except from that prayer—which should suffice to make him a teacher of the righteous in every generation. And if we wanted a prayer especially suited to New Year's day, where could we find more appropriate utterances? If we would begin, as we ought to begin, the year with petitions that such portion of it as God may appoint us to spend upon earth may be spent in greater spiritual enlargement, in deeper purity of heart and of life, and in more abundant experience of the goodness of the Lord, than may have marked the past year, what more copious, more adequate, expressions could any one of us use than these, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me?" Happy, happy man, happy woman, happy child, who should pray this prayer in faith, and thus insure that it shall have to be said, as of Jabez, "And God granted him that which he requested." But this is anticipating our subject. Let us now take the several parts of the text in succession, commenting upon each, and searching out the lessons which may be useful to ourselves. The first verse contains a short account of Jabez; the second is occupied by his

prayer. Come, and let us see whether there be not something to instruct us even in the brief narrative of his life, and whether, as "strangers and pilgrims upon earth," with a battle to fight, a race to run, an inheritance to possess, we can find more appropriate supplications than those in which this Jabez called on the Lord God of Israel.

Now there is no denying—for it is forced on us by every day's experience—that we are short-sighted beings, so little able to look into the future that we constantly miscalculate as to what would be for our good, anticipating evil from what is working for benefit, and reckoning upon benefit from that which may prove fraught with nothing but evil. How frequently does that which we have baptized with our tears make the countenance sunny with smiles! how frequently, again, does that which we have welcomed with smiles wring from us tears! That which has raised anxious thoughts proves often a rich source of joy; and, as often, that which hardly cost us a care, so bright was its promise, wounds to the quick, and burdens us with grief. We do not know the particular reasons which influenced the mother of Jabez to call him by that name, a name which means "Sorrowful." We are merely told, "His mother called his name Jabez, saying, because I bare him with sorrow." Whether it were that she brought forth this son with more than common anguish, or whether, as it may have been, the time of his birth were the time of her widowhood, so that the child came and found no father to welcome him—the mother evidently felt but little of a mother's joy, and looked on her infant with forebodings and fears. Perhaps it could hardly have been her own bodily suffering which made her fasten on the boy a dark and gloomy appellation, for, the danger past, she would rather have given a name commemorative of deliverance, remembering "no more her anguish for joy that a man was born into the world." Indeed, when Rachel bare Benjamin, she called his name Benoni, that is, the son of my sorrow; but then it was "as her soul was in departing, for she died." And when there pressed upon a woman in her travail



heavier things than her bodily pains—as with the wife of Phinehas, to whom were brought sad “tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead”—the mind could fix on the more fatal facts, and perpetuate their remembrance through the name of the child; she called—and it was with her last breath, for she too, like Rachel, died—she called the child Ichabod, “saying, The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.”

We may well, therefore, suppose that the mother of Jabez had deeper and more lasting sorrows to register in the name of her boy than those of the giving him birth. And whatsoever may have been the cause, whether domestic affliction or public calamity, we may consider the woman as having bent in bitterness over her new-born child, having only tears to give him as his welcome to the world, and feeling it impossible to associate with him even a hope of happiness. She had probably looked with different sentiments on her other children. She had clasped them to her breast with all a mother's gladness, and gazed upon them in the fond anticipation of their proving the supports and comforts of her own declining years. But with Jabez it was all gloom; the mother felt as if she could never be happy again: this boy brought nothing but an accession of care, anxiety, and grief; and if she must give him a name, let it be one which may always remind himself and others of the dark heritage to which he had been born. And yet the history of the family is gathered into the brief sentence, “Jabez was more honorable than his brethren.” The child of sorrow outstripped all the others in those things which are “acceptable to God, and approved of men.” Nothing is told us of his brethren, except that they were less honorable than himself; they too may have been excellent, and perhaps as much is implied, but Jabez took the lead, and whether or not the youngest in years, surpassed every other in piety and renown. Oh, if the mother lived to see the manhood of her sons, how strangely must the name Jabez, a name probably given in a moment of despondency and faithlessness, have fallen on

her ear, as it was woven into message after message, each announcing that the child of sorrow was all that the most affectionate parent could wish, and more than the most aspiring could have hoped. She may then have regretted the gloomy and ominous name, feeling as though it reproached her for having yielded to her grief, and allowed herself to give way to dreary forebodings. It may have seemed to her as a standing memorial of her want of confidence in God, and of the falseness of human calculations; and as she embraced Jabez, whose every action endeared, as it ennobled him the more, she may have felt that the sorrow had to be transferred from the name to her own heart; she herself had to grieve, but only that, through mistrust of the Lord, she had recorded her fear where she should have exhibited her faith.

And is not this brief notice of the mother of Jabez full of warning and admonition to ourselves? How ready are we to give the name Jabez to persons or things, which, could we but look into God's purpose, or repose on his promise, we might regard as designed to minister permanently to our security and happiness. “All these things,” said the patriarch Jacob, “are against me,” as one trial after another fell to his lot: if he had been asked to name each event, the loss of Joseph, the binding of Simeon, the sending away of Benjamin, he would have written Jabez upon each—so dark did it seem to him, so sure to work only wo. And yet, as you all know, it was by and through these gloomy dealings that a merciful God was providing for the sustenance of the patriarch and his household, for their support and aggrandizement in a season of extraordinary pressure. As Joseph said to his brethren, “God did send me before you to preserve life”—what man would have named Jabez was God's minister for good. Thus it continually happens in regard of ourselves. We give the sorrowful title to that which is designed for the beneficent end. Judging only by present appearances, allowing our fears and feelings, rather than our faith, to take the estimate or fix the character of occurrences, we look with gloom on our friends, and with melan-

choly on our sources of good. Sickness, we call it Jabez, though it may be sent to minister to our spiritual health; poverty, we call it Jabez, though coming to help us to the possession of heavenly riches; bereavement, we call it Jabez, though designed to graft us more closely into the household of God. O for a better judgment! or rather, O for a simpler faith! We cannot indeed see the end from the beginning, and therefore cannot be sure that what rises in cloud will set in vermilion and gold; but we need not take upon ourselves to give the dark name, as though we could not be deceived in regard of the nature. The mother of him who proved "more honorable than his brethren" may have been unable to prognosticate aught but sorrow for and from this child—so much of threatening aspect may have hung round his entrance upon life—but she should have called him by a name expressive of dependence on God, rather than of despondency and soreness of heart.

Let us derive this lesson from the concise but striking narrative in the first verse of our text. Let us neither look confidently on what promises best, nor despairingly on what wears the most threatening appearance. God often wraps up the withered leaf of disappointment in the bright purple bud, and as often enfolds the golden flower of enjoyment in the nipped and blighted shoot. Experience is full of evidence that there is no depending on appearances; that things turn out widely different from what could have been anticipated: the child of most promise perhaps living to pierce as with a sword, the child of least, to apply balsam to the wound; events which have menaced ministering to happiness, and those which have come like enemies doing the office of friends. So that, if there be one duty more pressed upon us by what we might observe than another, it is that of waiting meekly upon the Lord, never cherishing a wish that we might choose for ourselves, and never allowing a doubt that he orders all for our good. Oh, be careful that you pronounce not harshly of his dealings, that you provoke him not by speaking as though you could see through his purpose,

and decide on its being one of unmixed calamity. If you are so ready with your gloomy names, he may suspend his gracious designs. If, in a spirit of repining or unbelief, you brand as Jabez what may be but a blessing in disguise, no marvel if sometimes, in just anger and judgment, he allow the title to prove correct, and suffer not this Jabez, this child born in sorrow, to become to you, as otherwise it might, more honorable, more profitable, than any of its brethren.

But let us now turn to the prayer of Jabez: there might be a sermon made on each petition; but we must content ourselves with a brief comment on the successive requests. Yet we ought not to examine the prayer without pausing to observe to whom it is addressed. It is not stated that Jabez called on God, but on "the God of Israel;" and, unimportant as this may seem on a cursory glance, it is a particular which, duly pondered, will be found full of beauty and interest.

There are few things more significant than the difference in the manner in which God is addressed by saints under the old and under the new dispensation. Patriarchs pray to God as the God of their fathers; Apostles pray to him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In both forms of address there is an intimation of the same fact, that we need something to encourage us in approaching unto God; that, exposed as we are to his just wrath for our sins, we can have no confidence in speaking to him as to absolute Deity. There must be something to lean upon, some plea to urge, otherwise we can but shrink from the presence of One so awful in his gloriousness; our lips must be sealed; for what can it avail that corrupt creatures should ask mercies from a Being, all whose attributes pledge him to the pouring on them vengeance? They may tell you that prayer is the voice of nature—but it is of nature in utter ignorance of itself and of God. The savage offers his petitions to the unknown spirit of the mountain or the flood; yes—to the unknown spirit: let the savage be better informed as to what God is, let him be also taught as to what himself is, and he will be more disposed to the silence of despair than to the importunity of



supplication. We must, then, have some title with which to address God—some title which, interfering not with his majesty or his mysteriousness, may yet place him under a character which shall give hope to the sinful as they prostrate themselves before him. We need not say, that, under the Gospel dispensation, this title should be that which is used by St. Paul, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Having such a Mediator through whom to approach, there is no poor supplicant who may not come with boldness to the mercy-seat. But under earlier dispensations, when the mediatorial office was but imperfectly made known, men had to seize on other pleas and encouragements; and then it was a great thing, that they could address God, as you continually find him addressed, as the God of Israel, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. The title assured them that God was ready to hear prayer and to answer it. They went before God, thronged, as it were, with remembrances of mercies bestowed, deliverances vouchsafed, evils averted: how could they fear that God was too great to be addressed, too occupied to reply, or too stern to show kindness, when they bore in mind how he had shielded their parents, hearkened to their cry, and proved himself unto them "a very present help" in all time of trouble?

Ah, and though under the new dispensation, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" be the great character under which God should be addressed by us in prayer, there is no need for our altogether dropping the title, the God of our fathers. It might often do much to cheer a sorrowful heart and to encourage a timid, to address God as the God of our fathers. The God in whom my parents' trusted, the God who heard my parents' cries, the God who supplied my parents' wants—oh, there is many a poor wanderer who would be more encouraged, and more admonished, through such a remembrance of God as this, than through all the definitions of a rigid theology. There are some here—the mother did not, indeed, give them the name Jabez at their birth; she looked on them hopefully, with eyes brimful

of gladness; but they have since sorely wrung the hearts of their parents—disobedient, dissipated, thankless, that sharper thing, it is said, than the tooth of the serpent. There are some such here; some who helped to bring down a father's "grey hairs with sorrow to the grave:" others, whose parents still survive; but if you could look in unexpectedly on those parents, you might often find them shedding scalding tears, shedding them on account of a child who is to them a Jabez, as causing only grief, whatever brighter name they gave him amid the hopes and promises of baptism. We speak to those of you whose consciences bear witness, that their parents would have predicted but truth had they named them Jabez, that is, sorrowful. We want to bring you to begin the new year with resolutions of amendment and vows of better things. But resolutions and vows are worth nothing, except as made in God's strength and dependence on his grace. And therefore must you pray to God: it were vain to hope any thing from you unless you will give yourselves to prayer. But how shall you address God, the God whom you have neglected, the God whom you have provoked, the God of whom you might justly fear, that he is too high, too holy, and too just, to receive petitions from such as yourselves? Oh, we might give you lofty titles, but they would only bewilder you; we might define him by his magnificent attributes, but they would rather terrify than encourage you. But it may soften, and at the same time strengthen you; it may aid your contrition, wring from you tears, and yet fill you with hope, to go before God with all the imagery around you of the home of your childhood, the mind's eye arraying the reverend forms of those who gave you birth, as they kneel down in anguish, and cry unto the Lord—ay, cry on your behalf, and cry not in vain; for it may be in answer to their prayer, that you now attempt to pray. Oh, we shall indeed hope for you, ye wanderers, ye prodigals, if, when ye go hence, ye will seek the solitude of your chambers and fall upon your knees, and, allowing memory to do its office, however painful and reproachful, address



God, as Jabez addressed him, as the God of Israel, the God of your parents.

And what did Jabez pray for? for great things—great, if you suppose him to have spoken only as an heir of the temporal Canaan, greater, if you ascribe to him acquaintance with the mercies of redemption. "Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" Lay the emphasis on that word "indeed." Many things pass for blessings which are not; to as many more we deny, though we ought to give the character. There is a blessing in appearance which is not also a blessing in reality; and conversely, the reality may exist where the appearance is wanting. The man in prosperity appears to have, the man in adversity to be without, a blessing—yet how often does God bless by withholding and withdrawing! more frequently, it may be, than by giving and continuing. Therefore, "Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed." Let me not have what looks like blessing, and perhaps is not, but what is blessing, however unlike it may appear. Let it come under any form, disappointment, tribulation, persecution, only "bless me indeed!" bless me, though it be with the rod. I will not prescribe the nature of the dealing; deal with me as Thou wilt, with the blow or with the balm, only "bless me indeed!"

And Jabez goes on, "That thou wouldest enlarge my coast." He probably speaks as one who had to win from the enemy his portion of the promised land. He knew that, as the Lord said to Joshua, "There remained yet very much land to be possessed:" it was not then necessarily as a man desirous of securing to himself a broader inheritance, it may have been as one who felt jealous that the idolater should still defile what God had set apart for his people, that he entreated the enlargement of his coast. And a Christian may use the same prayer; he, too, has to ask that his coast may be enlarged. Who amongst us has yet taken possession of one half the territory assigned him by God? Of course we are not speaking of the inheritance that is above, of share in the land whereof Canaan was the type, and which we cannot enter but by dying. But there is a present inher-

ance, "a land flowing with milk and with honey," which is ours in virtue of adoption into the family of God, but much of which we allow to remain unpossessed, through deficiency in diligence or in faith. Our privileges as Christians, as members of an apostolical church, as heirs of the kingdom of heaven, how are these practically undervalued, how little are they realized, how sluggishly appropriated! We remain—alas, we are contented to remain—in suspense as to our spiritual condition, in the enjoyment of but a fraction of the ministrations appointed by the church, in low attainments, contracted views, and half-performed duties. What districts of unpossessed territory are there in the Bible! how much of that blessed book has been comparatively unexamined by us! We have our favorite parts, and give only an occasional and cursory notice to the rest. How little practical use do we make of God's promises! how slow is our progress in that humbleness of mind, that strength of faith, and that holiness of life, which are as much a present reward as an evidence of fitness for the society of heaven! What need then for the prayer, "Oh that thou wouldest enlarge my coast!" I would not be circumscribed in spiritual things. I would not live always within these narrow bounds. There are bright and glorious tracts beyond. I would know more of God, more of Christ, more of myself. I cannot be content to remain as I am, whilst there is so much to do, so much to learn, so much to enjoy. Oh for an enlargement of coast, that I may have a broader domain of Christian privilege, more eminences from which to catch glimpses of the fair rich land hereafter to be reached, and wider sphere in which to glorify God by devoting myself to his service. It is a righteous covetousness, this for an enlargement of coast; for he has done little, we might almost say nothing, in religion, who can be content with what he has done. It is a holy ambition, this which pants for an ampler territory. But are we only to pray? are we not also to struggle, for the enlargement of our coasts? Indeed we are: observe how Jabez proceeds, "And that thine hand might be

with me." He represents himself as arming for the enlargement of his coast, but as knowing all the while that "the battle is the Lord's." Be it thus with ourselves; we will pray that, during the coming year, our coasts may be enlarged; oh for more of those deep havens where the soul may anchor in still waters of comfort! oh for a longer stretch of those sunny shores whereon the tree of life grows, and where angel visitants seem often to alight! But, in order to this enlargement, let us give ourselves to closer study of the word, to a more diligent use of the ordinances of the Church, and to harder struggle with the flesh. Only let all be done with the practical consciousness that "except the Lord build the house, their labor is but lost that build it." This will be to arm ourselves, like Jabez, for the war, but, like Jabez, to expect success only so far as God's hand shall be with us.

There is one more petition in the prayer of him who, named with a dark and inauspicious name, yet grew to be "more honorable than his brethren." "That thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me." It is not an entreaty for actual exemption from evil—it were no pious wish to have no evil whatsoever in our portion: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Jabez prayed not for the being kept from evil, but kept from the being grieved by evil. And there is a vast difference between the being visited by evil, and grieved by evil. He is grieved by evil, who does not receive it meekly and submissively, as the chastisement of his heavenly Father. He is grieved by evil, whom evil injures, in place of benefits—which latter is always God's purpose in its permission or appointment. He is grieved by evil, whom it drives into sin, and to whom, therefore, it furnishes cause of bitter repentance.

You see, then, that Jabez showed great spiritual discernment in casting his prayer into this particular form. We too should pray, not absolutely that God would keep us from evil, but that he would so keep it from us, or us from it, that it may not grieve us. The coming year can hardly fail to bring with it its portion of trouble. There

are individuals here who will have much to endure, whether in person, or family, or substance. It is scarcely assuming the place of the prophet, if I say that I see the funeral procession moving from some of your doors, and sorrow, under one shape or another, breaking like an armed man into many of your households. But if it were too much to hope that evil may not come, it is not too much to pray that evil may not grieve. Ah, if we knew approaching events, we should, perhaps, be ready to give the name Jabez to the year which has this day been born. And yet may this Jabez be more honorable than his brethren, a year of enlargement of our coasts, of greater acquisition in spiritual things, of growth in grace, of closer conformity to the image of Christ. It is not the tribulation with which its days may be charged, which can prevent such result; nay, rather, it may only advance it. And it shall be this, if we but strive to cultivate that submissiveness of spirit, that firm confidence in the wisdom and goodness of the Lord, that disposition to count nothing really injurious but what injures the soul, yea, every thing profitable from which the soul may gain good, which may all be distinctly traced in the simple, comprehensive petition, "Oh that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me."

Now we have thus endeavored to interweave with our subject-matter of discourse such reflections and observations as might be specially appropriate to a New Year's day. But there is one thing of which I had almost lost sight. I have to ask you for a New Year's day present, not indeed for myself, which I might hesitate to do, but for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, in whose name I may beg, and have nothing to blush at, unless it were a refusal. Of all days in the year, this is peculiarly a day for "sending portions" to the distressed, sending them as a thank-offering for the many mercies with which the past year has been marked. And our long-established and long-tried District Society for visiting and relieving the poor of the neighborhood, makes its annual appeal to you for the means of carrying on its benevolent work. It appeals to the re-

gular congregation, as to those whose engine and instrument it especially is: it appeals also to strangers; for they who come hither to join in our worship, may with all justice be asked to assist us in our charities. I need not dwell on the excellences of this society. I shall venture to say, that, through the kindness and zeal of our visitors, whom we can never sufficiently thank, but whom God will reward—for theirs is the fine christian benevolence, the benevolence which gives time, the benevolence which gives labor, the benevolence which seeks no showy stage, no public scene, but is content to ply, patient and unobserved, in the hovels of poverty and at the bedside of sickness; I shall venture to say, that, through the kindness of these visitors, a vast deal is daily done towards alleviating sorrow, lightening distress, and bringing the pastor into contact with the sick and the erring of his flock. It were very easy to sketch many pictures which might incline you to be even more than commonly liberal in your New Year's day gift. But I shall attempt only one, and furnish nothing but the briefest outline even of that. There is a mother in yonder wretched and desolate room, who has but lately given birth to a boy; and there is no father to welcome him, for, only a few weeks back, half broken-hearted, she laid her husband in the grave. What shall she call that boy, thus born to her in the midst of wretchedness and anguish? Oh, by no cheer-

ful name. She feels, as she bends over him, as if he were indeed the child of sorrow: so dreary is her state, so friendless, that, were it not for the strivings of that sweet and sacred thing, a mother's fondness for her babe, she could almost wish him with his father in the grave, that he might not have to share her utter destitution. Left to herself, she could but, like the Jewish mother, call his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bare him with sorrow." But she is not left to herself: a kind voice bids her be of good cheer; a friendly hand brings her nourishment: she looks smilingly on her child, for she has been suddenly made to hear, and to taste of the loving-kindness of God, "the husband of the widow, and the father of the fatherless." Oh, what a change has passed over that lonely and wretched apartment; you will not ask through what instrumentality, but you will thank God that such an instrumentality is in active operation around you; you will do your best to keep up its efficiency. And as that suffering woman no longer thinks of calling her child Jabez, that is, Sorrowful, but rather wishes some title expressive of thanksgiving and hopefulness; you will so share her gladness as to feel how appropriately the organ's solemn swell now summons you to join in the doxology:

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

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